

This section discusses additional topics statutorily required by CEQA, specifically: growth-inducing impacts, significant irreversible environmental changes/irretrievable commitment of resources, and significant and unavoidable environmental impacts.

7.1 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluate the growth-inducing impacts of a proposed action. A growth-inducing impact is defined in the CEQA Guidelines as

“the way[] 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. Included in this are projects which would remove obstacles to population growth... Section 15126.2(d).

Section 15126.2 cautions that “it must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.”

A project can have direct and/or indirect growth inducement potential. Direct growth inducement would result if a project, for example, involved construction of new housing. A project would have indirect growth inducement potential if it established substantial new permanent employment opportunities (e.g., through commercial, industrial or governmental enterprises) or if it would involve a construction effort with substantial short-term employment opportunities that would indirectly stimulate the need for additional housing and services to support the new employment demand. Similarly, a project would indirectly induce growth if it would remove an obstacle to additional growth and development, such as removing a constraint on a required public service. A project providing an increased water supply in an area where water service historically limited growth could be considered growth inducing.

The State CEQA Guidelines further explain that the environmental effects of induced growth are considered indirect impacts of the proposed action. These indirect impacts or secondary effects of growth may result in significant, adverse environmental impacts. Potential secondary effects of growth include increased demand on other community and public services and infrastructure, increased traffic and noise, and adverse environmental impacts such as degradation of air and water quality, degradation or loss of plant and animal habitat, and conversion of agricultural and open space land to developed uses.

Growth inducement may constitute an adverse impact if the growth is not consistent with or accommodated by the land use plans and growth management plans and policies for the area affected. Local land use plans provide for land use development patterns and growth policies that allow for the orderly expansion of urban development supported by adequate urban public services, such as water supply, roadway infrastructure, sewer service, and solid waste service.

COMPONENTS OF GROWTH

The timing, magnitude, and location of land development and population growth in a community or region are based on various interrelated land use and economic variables. Key variables include regional economic trends, market demand for residential and non-residential uses, land availability and cost, the availability and quality of transportation facilities and public

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services, proximity to employment centers, the supply and cost of housing, and regulatory policies or conditions. Since the general plan of a community defines the location, type and intensity of growth, it is the primary means of regulating development and growth in California.

GROWTH EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

Based on Government Code Section 65300, the proposed General Plan is intended to serve as the overall plan for the physical development of the City of Rancho Cordova. While the General Plan does not specifically propose any development projects, it does regulate future population and economic growth of the City, which would result in indirect growth-inducing effects.

Implementation of the proposed General Plan would redefine the existing land use designations in the incorporated City and would conceptually redefine land use designations for the areas outside of the City but within the Planning Area. At such time that these areas are annexed into the City, the land use designations would apply to future development. The General Plan would establish new policies, actions and design guidelines to guide and manage future development and land uses in the City. This would also include policy direction on roadway facility improvements, public service improvements, and the extension and expansion of utilities. The specific environmental effects resulting from the proposed land use patterns and associated extension of public services are discussed in the environmental issue areas in Sections 4.1 through 4.13. The proposed General Plan would result in a residential buildout (assumed to occur by the year 2050) of approximately 126,241 residential units and a population of 310,568 persons.

Population Growth

As described in Section 4.3 (Population/Housing/Employment), the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG), in its *Sacramento Region Blueprint: Transportation/Land Use Study*, projected 112,290 housing units in 2050 in the approximate area of the proposed General Plan "Planning Area" (boundaries are slightly different in the two plans. By comparison, current projections in the proposed General Plan anticipate that the City's Planning Area will have 126,241 housing units at buildout. The proposed General Plan projects slightly less population under buildout conditions in the City's Planning Area, 310,568 people, as compared to the Blueprint's projection of 332,000 people. Employment, however, is much greater under the General Plan Planning Area buildout projections--195,021 jobs, compared to 144,406 jobs under SACOG's projections. In addition, SACOG projects the City's job/housing ratio in year 2025 to be 1.29, while implementation of the proposed General Plan is expected to result in a job/housing ratio of 1.54. Thus, the implementation of the proposed General Plan would not accommodate population growth to the degree and density projected by SACOG. However, implementation of the proposed General Plan would have capacity for more housing units and potential places of employment beyond what the Blueprint projected, thereby reducing the potential number of commuters out of the City.

Buildout of the proposed Planning Area, if it occurred under the current Sacramento County General Plan Land Use Map, would have accommodated 88,301 residential dwelling units and a population of approximately 236,647. The proposed General Plan allows for more housing units and higher population growth than the Sacramento County General Plan.

Thus, the proposed General Plan would accommodate more growth than originally anticipated for the Planning Area and in a more compact/urban form, reducing vehicle miles traveled (see Section 4.5, Transportation and Circulation). However, this intensification of urban land uses is in

conflict with current Sacramento County General Plan land use intensities (see Section 4.1, Land Use) and could induce property owners adjacent to the Planning Area to request general plan amendments for urban uses rather than current agricultural designations. The environmental effect of potential development of the Planning Area is addressed in this Draft EIR.

Growth Effects Associated with Infrastructure Improvements

The proposed General Plan could potentially indirectly induce growth if it would remove an obstacle to additional growth and development, such as removing a constraint on a required public service. The City's infrastructure and public services are largely provided by other public and private service providers (e.g., Sacramento County Water Agency for water supply, Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District and County Sanitation District 1 for wastewater service, Sacramento Municipal Utility District for electrical service, Pacific Gas & Electric for gas service), which utilize master plans for guiding planned facility and service expansions that are subject to environmental review under CEQA.

The proposed General Plan includes proposed roadway improvements that have been designed to support the General Plan Land Use Policy Map and maintain the City's proposed level of service (LOS) standard of LOS "D" where feasible and appropriate. The proposed General Plan does not include any provisions requiring the oversizing of infrastructure facilities to serve growth not anticipated in the General Plan Land Use Policy Map. The physical environmental effects of the proposed roadway improvements within the Planning Area and any off-site impacts that could result from the proposed roadway improvements, where the roads continue into other jurisdictions, have been disclosed in this Draft EIR.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF GROWTH

As described above, the proposed General Plan would induce further population and job growth in the City, and within the Planning Area to the extent that these areas are annexed into the City, as well as potentially induce growth outside of the City and Planning Area (at the interface with other jurisdictions). Growth inducement in areas outside of the City would be limited by the adopted land uses of those jurisdictions, but, as described above, development pressure could result in requests for amendment of the General Plans of other jurisdictions. The following proposed General Plan policies, i.e., to create a buffer of lower intensity development at the edges of the City and to create a defined City edge, would serve to reduce development pressure to intensify development at the boundaries of the City:

- Policy UD.2.3 Transition the density and intensity of uses from an urban to rural character with a clear City edge and establish a sense of entry and arrival to the City.*

- NR.9.1 Encourage small-scale agricultural practices along the edges of the Planning Area to facilitate the transition of density.*

Proposed roadway improvements support growth within the City, but would also facilitate further growth. As a result, the proposed General Plan is considered to be growth inducing. The environmental effects of growth within the City and Planning Area, addressed in Sections 4.1 through 4.13 of this Draft EIR, and the project's cumulative impacts (Section 5.0) and would be in addition to the following additional environmental effects of growth in the region:

- Aesthetics – Further conversion of rural, agricultural and natural open space landscape characteristics to urban conditions.

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- Agricultural Resources – Continued loss of farmland to urban uses as well as increased conflicts with agricultural operations and urban uses.
- Air Quality – Increases in air pollutant emissions potentially conflicting with air quality attainment efforts under state and federal Clean Air Acts, and increased potential for the exposure to toxic air contaminants.
- Biological Resources – Loss of special-status plant and animal species habitats, degradation of habitats, and loss of special-status species.
- Cultural Resources – Impacts to known and unknown archaeological and historic resources in the region.
- Geology and Soils – Loss of access to known valuable mineral resources.
- Hydrology and Water Quality – Additional sources of point and non-point sources of surface water quality pollutants to region waterways. Further demand on groundwater resources and potential overdraft issues.
- Noise – Increased transportation noise levels from increased traffic volumes.
- Public Services and Utilities – Increased demand for the development and expansion of public services and facilities and associated environmental issues.
- Traffic – Increased traffic volumes on the region's highways and regional roadways resulting in deficient levels of service of operation.

7.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Public Resources Code Sections 21100(b)(2) and 21100.1(a) require that EIRs prepared for the adoption of plan, policy, or ordinance of a public agency must include a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes of project implementation. The CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c) describes irreversible environmental changes as:

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. Irrecoverable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

Implementation of the proposed City of Rancho Cordova General Plan would result in the conversion of undeveloped open space and agricultural land areas to residential, commercial, industrial, office, public and recreational uses. Development of the City, and the Planning Area to the extent that the area is annexed into the City, would constitute a long-term commitment to residential land uses and loss of productive agricultural soils and natural resources (e.g., wetland resources). It is unlikely that circumstances would arise that would justify the return of the land to its original (pre-proposed General Plan) condition.

Development under the proposed General Plan would irretrievably commit building materials and energy to the construction and maintenance of buildings and infrastructure proposed.

Renewable, nonrenewable, and limited resources that would likely be consumed as part of the development of the proposed project would include, but are not limited to: oil, gasoline, lumber, sand and gravel, asphalt, water, steel, and similar materials. In addition, development of the project would result in increased demand on public services and utilities (see Sections 4.9 Hydrology and Water Quality and 4.12 Public Services and Utilities).

7.3 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(b) requires an EIR to discuss unavoidable significant environmental effects, including those that can be mitigated, but not to a level of insignificance. Section 15093(a) of the CEQA Guidelines allows the decision-making agency, in approving a project, to determine that the benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental impacts of implementing the project. However, the City can approve a project with unavoidable significant adverse impacts if it prepares a "Statement of Overriding Considerations" setting forth the specific reasons for making such a judgment, and makes other findings required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15091.

The following significant and unavoidable impacts of the proposed General Plan are specifically identified in Sections 4.1 through 4.13, and Section 5.0 of this EIR. The reader is referred to the various environmental issue areas of these sections for further details and analysis of the significant and unavoidable impacts identified below.

SECTION 4.1 LAND USE

Conflicts with Relevant Land Use Plans, Policies or Regulations

Impact 4.1.3 Implementation of the proposed General Plan has the potential to conflict with applicable land use plans, policies or regulations of agencies with jurisdiction over parts of the Planning Area that provide for environmental protection. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Land Use Effects

Impact 4.1.5 When considered with existing, proposed, planned and approved development in the region, implementation of the Rancho Cordova General Plan has the potential to result to contribute cumulative land use conditions in the region that result in significant impacts to the physical environment. This is considered a **cumulatively considerable** impact.

SECTION 4.2 AGRICULTURE

Loss and Conversion of Agricultural Land

Impact 4.2.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in the loss of important farmlands (Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance, etc) as designated by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. This is considered a **significant** impact.

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Agricultural/Urban Interface Conflicts

Impact 4.2.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan could result in the placement of urban uses adjacent to agricultural uses within and adjacent to the City. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Williamson Act Contracts

Impact 4.2.3 Implementation of the proposed General Plan could result in a conflict with existing Williamson Act contracts. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Impacts to Agricultural Resources

Impact 4.2.4 Implementation of the General Plan Land Use Map Book along, with other proposed development in Sacramento County, would contribute to the additional conversion of important farmlands to other uses and may increase agriculture/urban interface conflicts. This is a **cumulatively considerable** impact.

SECTION 4.3 POPULATION/HOUSING/EMPLOYMENT

Population, Housing and Employment Increases

Impact 4.3.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Land Use Map would include land uses that promote the increase in population, housing, and employment to the area, and thus induce substantial growth. This is a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Population and Housing Increases

Impact 4.3.3 Buildout in the planning area, under the proposed General Plan Land Use Map, would include substantial population, housing unit and employment increases. This is considered a **cumulatively considerable** impact.

SECTION 4.5 TRAFFIC AND CIRCULATION

Study Roadway Segments

Impact 4.5.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in an increase in traffic volumes that would result in deficient level of service conditions in year 2030. This would be a **significant** impact.

Study Freeway Segments

Impact 4.5.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would exacerbate unacceptable operations on eastbound and westbound U.S. 50 during the a.m. and p.m. peak hours. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Traffic Impacts on Local Roadways and State Highways

Impact 4.5.6 When considered with existing, proposed, planned and approved development in the region, implementation of the Rancho Cordova General

Plan would contribute to cumulative traffic volumes in the region that result in significant impacts to level of service and operations. This is considered a **cumulatively considerable** impact.

SECTION 4.6 AIR QUALITY

Conflict with the SMAQMD Regional Ozone Attainment Plan

Impact 4.6.1 The implementation of the proposed City of Rancho Cordova General Plan land uses would conflict with the land use assumptions used 1994 SMAQMD Regional Ozone Attainment Plan. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact to air quality.

Construction Air Pollutants

Impact 4.6.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in short-term emissions generated by construction and demolition activities that would affect local air quality and could result in health and nuisance-type impacts in the immediate vicinity of individual construction sites as well as contribute to particulate matter and regional ozone impacts. This is considered a **significant** impact to air quality.

Operational Air Pollutants

Impact 4.6.3 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would increase air pollutant emissions from operational activities of land uses within the Planning Area will exceed thresholds for ROG and NOx, and other federal or state emissions standards. This is considered a **significant impact**.

Sources of Toxic Air Contaminants

Impact 4.6.4 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would include sources of toxic air contaminants that may affect surrounding land uses. Sensitive land uses may also be located near existing sources toxic air contaminants. This impact is considered **potentially significant** impact.

Regional Air Quality Impacts

Impact 4.6.6 Implementation of the proposed General Plan along with potential development of the Planning Area would exacerbate existing regional problems with ozone and particulate matter. The proposed General Plan's contribution to these conditions is considered **cumulatively considerable**.

SECTION 4.7 NOISE

Construction Noise Impacts

Impact 4.7.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in subsequent development projects and cause an increase in construction noise levels that would exceed City of Rancho Cordova noise standards. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact.

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Traffic Noise Impacts

Impact 4.7.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in increases in traffic noise levels that would be in excess of City of Rancho Cordova noise standards. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Stationary Noise Impacts

Impact 4.7.3 Implementation of the proposed General Plan could result in future stationary noise sources that generate noise levels in excess of applicable noise standards for non-transportation noise sources. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact.

Airport Noise Impacts

Impact 4.7.4 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in the creation of new noise-sensitive land uses within the 65 dB CNEL noise contours contained within the Mather Airport CLUP. Additionally, the implementation of the General Plan would result in the creation of new noise-sensitive land uses within over-flight areas of Mather Airport, thereby presenting the potential for annoyance from single event noise. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Traffic Noise

Impact 4.7.6 Implementation of the proposed General Plan in combination with regional growth and traffic conditions (pass-through traffic) would increase transportation noise along area roadways. This would be a **cumulatively considerable** impact.

Cumulative Stationary Noise

Impact 4.7.7 Implementation of the proposed General Plan, in combination with regional growth in surrounding communities outside of the Planning Area, would increase stationary noise. This is considered a **cumulatively considerable** impact.

SECTION 4.8 GEOLOGY AND SOIL

Mineral Resources

Impact 4.8.5 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in the loss of availability of aggregate resources, which are locally important due to their use by the construction community in development of the area. This is considered to be a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Mineral Resources

Impact 4.8.7 Implementation of the proposed General Plan, together with past, present, and probable future projects in the area, would result in a cumulatively significant loss of mineral resources in the region. The General Plan's incremental contribution to the loss of mineral resources is **cumulatively considerable**.

SECTION 4.9 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Increased Water Supply Demand Impacts

Impact 4.9.4 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would increase demand for water supply and require increased groundwater production and the use of surface water supplies. This additional water supply demand would result in significant effects on the physical environment. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Water Supply Impacts

Impact 4.9.7 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would contribute to an increased demand for water supply requiring increased groundwater production and the use of surface water supplies that could result in significant environmental impacts. This is considered a **cumulatively considerable** impact.

SECTION 4.10 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Impacts to Endangered, Threatened, and Other Listed Species

Impact 4.10.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in direct and indirect loss of habitat and individuals of endangered, threatened, rare, proposed, and candidate status as well as plant species identified by the California Native Plant Society with a rating of List 1B (i.e. rare, threatened or endangered plants). This would be a **significant** impact.

Impacts to Species of Concern and Other Non-Listed Special Status Species

Impact 4.10.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in direct and indirect loss of habitat and individuals of animal and plant species of concern and other non-listed special status species. This would be a **significant** impact.

Loss of Habitat

Impact 4.10.3 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in the loss of foraging habitat for raptors, migratory birds, and other wildlife. This would be a **significant** impact.

Direct and Indirect Impacts to Jurisdictional Waters

Impact 4.10.4 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in substantial adverse impacts to and the potential loss of jurisdictional waters of the U.S. This would be a **significant** impact.

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Effects on Wildlife Movement Corridors

Impact 4.10.5 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would interfere substantially with the movement of several special status and common wildlife species. This would be a **significant** impact.

Loss of Trees

Impact 4.10.6 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in the loss of native and landmark trees. This would be a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Biological Resources

Impact 4.10.8 Implementation of the proposed General Plan, together with past, present, and probable future projects in the Planning Area and larger regional context would result in a cumulatively significant loss of biological resources in the region. The General Plan's incremental contribution to this significant cumulative impact is **cumulatively considerable**.

4.11 CULTURAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Prehistoric Resources, Historic Resources, and Human Remains

Impact 4.11.1 Adoption of the City of Rancho Cordova General Plan could result in the potential disturbance of cultural resources (i.e., prehistoric sites, historic sites, and isolated prehistoric/historic artifacts and features) and human remains. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact.

Prehistoric Resources, Historic Resources, and Human Remains

Impact 4.11.3 Adoption of the Rancho Cordova General Plan along with foreseeable development in the region could result in the disturbance of cultural resources (i.e., prehistoric sites, historic sites, and isolated artifacts and features) and human remains. This contribution is considered **cumulatively considerable**.

SECTION 4.12 PUBLIC SERVICES AND UTILITIES

Water Supply Infrastructure

Impact 4.12.3.1 Implementation the General Plan would require additional treatment capacity, storage capacity, and other conveyance facilities to meet the projected water demands. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Water Service Impacts

Impact 4.12.3.2 Implementation of the General Plan would contribute to the need for additional treatment capacity, storage capacity, and other conveyance facilities to meet cumulative water demands with SCWA, GSWC and Cal-Am. The General Plan's contribution would be **cumulatively considerable**.

Wastewater Conveyance and Treatment

Impact 4.12.4.1 Implementation of the Rancho Cordova General Plan would substantially increase wastewater flows and require additional infrastructure and may require additional treatment capacity to accommodate anticipated demands that would result in a physical effect on the environment. This impact is considered **significant**.

Cumulative Wastewater Impacts

Impact 4.12.4.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan, in addition to other reasonably foreseeable development in eastern Sacramento County (based on the land use projections established in the Sacramento County General Plan), would substantially increase in wastewater flows and require additional infrastructure and treatment capacity that would result in a physical effect on the environment. This is considered **cumulatively considerable**.

SECTION 4.13 VISUAL RESOURCES/LIGHT AND GLARE

Alteration of Visual Character

Impact 4.13.3 Implementation of the General Plan will encourage new development and redevelopment activities that could degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Planning Area. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact.

Cumulative Visual Resources Impacts

Impact 4.13.5 Implementation of the General Plan will encourage new development and redevelopment activities that would contribute to the cumulative alteration of existing landscape characteristics of the region. This impact is **cumulatively considerable**.