

This Draft Environmental Impact Report ("Draft EIR" or "DEIR") was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Cal. Pub. Resources Code Sections 21000, et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (14 Cal. Code Regs., Section 15000, et seq.). The City of Rancho Cordova (City) is the lead agency for the environmental review of the proposed City of Rancho Cordova General Plan ("project" or "proposed project") evaluated herein and has the principal responsibility for approving the project. This DEIR assesses the expected environmental impacts resulting from adoption of the proposed Rancho Cordova General Plan and associated impacts from subsequent development under the Plan.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE EIR

The City, acting as the lead agency, has prepared this Draft EIR to provide the public and responsible and trustee agencies with information about the potential environmental effects of the proposed Rancho Cordova General Plan. As described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15121(a), an EIR is a public informational document that assesses potential environmental effects of the proposed project, as well as identifies mitigation measures and alternatives to the proposed project that could reduce or avoid its adverse environmental impacts. Public agencies are charged with the duty to consider and, where feasible, minimize environmental impacts of proposed development, and an obligation to balance a variety of public objectives, including economic, environmental, and social factors.

CEQA requires the preparation of an environmental impact report prior to approving any project, which may have a significant effect on the environment. For the purposes of CEQA, the term "project" refers to the whole of an action, which has the potential for resulting in a direct physical change or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378[a]). With respect to the proposed City of Rancho Cordova General Plan, the City has determined that the proposed plan is a "project" within the definition of CEQA.

1.2 KNOWN RESPONSIBLE AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

For the purpose of CEQA, a "Trustee" agency is has jurisdiction by law over natural resources that are held in trust for the people of the State of California. CEQA Guidelines Section 15386. The California Department of Fish and Game is a trustee agency with regard to the fish and wildlife of the state and designated rare or endangered native plants. The term "Responsible Agency" includes all public agencies other than the Lead Agency that have discretionary approval power over the project or an aspect of the project. CEQA Guidelines Section 15381. The following agencies are identified as potential Responsible Agencies:

- Sacramento County Local Agency Formation Commission
- Sacramento Area Council of Governments
- Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District
- Sacramento County Water Agency
- Sacramento County Airport System Planning and Development Department
- County Sanitation District-1
- Cordova Recreation and Park District
- Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District
- Folsom Cordova Unified School District
- Sacramento City Unified School District
- San Juan Unified School District
- Elk Grove Unified School District
- Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

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- State Water Resources Control Board
- Caltrans District 3
- Caltrans Division of Aeronautics
- California Department of Toxic Substances Control
- California Department of Fish and Game
- California Department of Conservation
- Native American Heritage Commission
- Federal Aviation Administration
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

1.3 TYPE OF DOCUMENT

The State CEQA Guidelines identify several types of EIRs, each applicable to different project circumstances. This EIR has been prepared as a Program EIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. According to Section 15168:

A program EIR is an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one 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*
- 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 program-level analysis considers the broad environmental effects of the overall proposed General Plan. This EIR will be used to evaluate subsequent projects and activities under the proposed General Plan. Additional environmental review under CEQA will be required and would be generally based on the subsequent project's consistency with the General Plan and the analysis in this EIR, as required under CEQA. When individual projects or activities under the General Plan are proposed, the City would be required to examine the projects or activities to determine whether their effects were adequately analyzed in the program EIR. CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. If the projects or activities would have no effects beyond those analyzed in this EIR, no further CEQA compliance would be required.

In addition, the program-level General Plan EIR analysis addresses the cumulative impacts of development of the proposed General Plan, and analyzes a reasonable range of alternative land use maps, at an equal level of detail.

1.4 INTENDED USES OF THE EIR

This EIR is intended to evaluate the environmental impacts of the project to the greatest extent possible. This EIR should be used as the primary environmental document to evaluate all subsequent planning and permitting actions associated with projects in the City. Subsequent actions that may be associated with the proposed General Plan are identified in Section 3.0 (Project Description) of this document.

1.5 ORGANIZATION AND SCOPE

Sections 15122 through 15132 of the State CEQA Guidelines identify the content requirements for Draft and Final EIRs. An EIR must include a description of the environmental setting, an environmental impact analysis, mitigation measures, alternatives, significant irreversible environmental changes, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts. Discussion of the environmental issues addressed in the Draft EIR was established through review of environmental and planning documentation developed for the project, environmental and planning documentation prepared for recent projects located within the Planning Area, environmental documentation developed for the County of Sacramento and cities and counties adjacent to the Planning Area, and public agency responses to the Notice of Preparation (NOP).

This Draft EIR is organized in the following manner:

SECTION 1.0 – INTRODUCTION

Section 1.0 provides an introduction and overview describing the purpose, type, and intended use of the EIR, responsible agencies, organization and scope of the EIR, the review and certification process, and a summary of comments received on the NOP.

SECTION 2.0 - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section summarizes the characteristics of the proposed project, known areas of controversy and issues to be resolved, and provides a concise summary matrix of the project's environmental impacts, General Plan policies, and possible mitigation measures, and identification of alternatives that reduce or avoid at least one environmental effect of the proposed General Plan.

SECTION 3.0 - PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This section provides a detailed description of the proposed project, including the location, intended objectives, background information, the physical and technical characteristics including the decisions subject to CEQA and a list of related environmental review and consultation requirements.

SECTION 4.0 - ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Section 4.0 contains an analysis of environmental topic areas as identified below. Each subsection contains a description of the existing setting of the project area, identifies project-related impacts, and recommends appropriate General Plan policies and mitigation measures.

This section also includes an introduction to the environmental analysis that describes the general assumptions used to evaluate project-specific and cumulative environmental impacts. However, specific analyses are provided in each environmental issue area section.

The following major environmental topics are addressed in this section:

- Land Use
- Agriculture
- Population/Housing/Employment
- Hazards and Human Health

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- Transportation and Circulation
- Noise
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Geology and Soils
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Paleontological Resources
- Public Services and Utilities
- Visual Resources/Light and Glare

SECTION 5.0 - CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY

This section summarizes all identified cumulative impacts associated with the proposed project. As required by State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130, an EIR shall discuss cumulative impacts of a project when the project's incremental effect is cumulatively considerable. CEQA Guidelines Section 15065(a)(3).

SECTION 6.0 - ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROJECT

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 requires that an EIR describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, which could feasibly attain the basic objectives of the project and avoid and/or lessen any significant environmental effects of the project. This alternatives analysis provides a comparative analysis between the merits of the project and the selected alternatives.

SECTION 7.0 - LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

This section contains discussions and analysis of various topical issues mandated by CEQA. These include significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the project is implemented, significant irreversible environmental changes and growth-inducing impacts.

SECTION 8.0 - REPORT PREPARERS

This section lists all authors and agencies that assisted in the preparation of the EIR, by name, title, and company or agency affiliation.

APPENDICES

This section includes all notices and other procedural documents pertinent to the EIR, as well as all technical material prepared to support the analysis.

1.6 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The review and certification process for the EIR has involved, or will involve, the following general procedural steps:

NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND INITIAL STUDY

In accordance with Section 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the City prepared a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR for the proposed project on February 25, 2005. The City was

identified as the Lead Agency for the proposed project. This notice was circulated to the State Clearinghouse and to the public, local, state, and federal agencies, and other interested parties to solicit comments on the proposed project. The NOP was posted on the City's website. A scoping meeting was held on March 9, 2005, to receive additional comments. Concerns raised in response to the NOP were considered during preparation of the Draft EIR. The NOP and responses by interested parties are presented in **Appendix 1.0**. An Initial Study for the project was prepared and released for public review along with the NOP. Its conclusions supported preparation of an EIR for the project. The Initial Study is also included in **Appendix 1.0**.

DRAFT EIR

This document constitutes the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR contains a description of the project, description of the environmental setting, identification of project impacts, and mitigation measures for impacts found to be significant, as well as an analysis of project alternatives, identification of significant irreversible environmental changes, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts. Upon completion of the Draft EIR, the City will file the Notice of Completion (NOC) with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to begin the public review period (Cal. Pub. Resources Code Section 21161).

PUBLIC NOTICE/PUBLIC REVIEW

Concurrent with the NOC, the County will provide public notice of the availability of the Draft EIR for public review, and invite comment from the general public, agencies, organizations, and other interested parties. Consistent with CEQA, the review period for this Draft EIR is forty-five (45) days. Public comment on the Draft EIR will be accepted both in written form and orally at public hearings. Although no public hearings to accept comments on the EIR are required by CEQA, the City expects to hold a public comment meeting during the forty-five (45) day review period. Notice of the date, time and location of the hearing will be published prior to the hearing. All comments or questions regarding the Draft EIR should be addressed to:

Pat Angell
City of Rancho Cordova
10461 Old Placerville Road, Suite 110
Rancho Cordova, CA 95827

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS/FINAL EIR

Following the public review period, a Final EIR will be prepared. The Final EIR will respond to written comments received during the public review period and to oral comments made at any public hearing during such review period.

CERTIFICATION OF THE EIR/PROJECT CONSIDERATION

The City will review and consider the Final EIR. If the City finds that the Final EIR is "adequate and complete", the City Council will certify the Final EIR. Upon review and consideration of the Final EIR, the City of Rancho Cordova City Council may take action to approve, revise, or reject the project. A decision to approve the proposed General Plan, for which this EIR identifies significant environmental effects, could only be made if accompanied by written findings in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15091 and Section 15093. A Mitigation Monitoring Program, as described below, would also be adopted for mitigation measures that have been incorporated into or imposed upon the project to reduce or avoid significant effects on the

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environment. This Mitigation Monitoring Program will be designed to ensure that these measures are carried out during project implementation, in a manner that is consistent with the EIR.

MITIGATION MONITORING

CEQA Section 21081.6(a) requires lead agencies to adopt a reporting and mitigation monitoring program to describe measures that have been adopted or made a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment. The specific "reporting or monitoring" program required by CEQA is not required to be included in the EIR, however it will be presented to City Council for adoption. Throughout the EIR, however, mitigation measures have been clearly identified and presented in language that will facilitate establishment of a monitoring and reporting program.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE EIR

Pursuant to CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, the scope of this DEIR includes specific issues and concerns identified as potentially significant physical effects on the environment. Based on both the Initial Study and the NOP comments, this EIR addresses the following topics in depth:

Environmental issue areas identified for study in this EIR include:

- Land Use
- Agriculture
- Population/Housing/Employment
- Hazards and Human Health
- Transportation and Circulation
- Noise
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Geology and Soils
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Paleontological Resources
- Public Services and Utilities
- Visual Resources/Light and Glare
- Growth Inducement
- Cumulative Impacts

The complete text of the NOP is contained in **Appendix 1.0**.

The City of Rancho Cordova determined that the preparation of an EIR was appropriate due to potentially significant environmental impacts that could result from implementing the proposed City of Rancho Cordova General Plan. This DEIR evaluates the existing environmental resources in the vicinity of the City, analyzes potential impacts on those resources due to the proposed project, and identifies mitigation measures that could avoid or reduce the magnitude of those impacts. This EIR provides a general review of the environmental effects of development of the City, based on proposed land use designations and estimated public service demands resulting therefrom. This EIR will be used to evaluate the direct and indirect environmental effects of subsequent development under the General Plan (e.g., residential subdivisions, rezones, commercial structures, park sites, recreation facility development, infrastructure improvements).

1.8 COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE NOTICE OF PREPARATION

The City received several comment letters on the Notice of Preparation for the City of Rancho Cordova General Plan DEIR. A copy of each letter is provided in **Appendix 1.0** of this DEIR. The City received letters from the following federal, state, and local agencies, and other interested parties.

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), District 3
- Delta Protection Commission
- State of California Department Of Conservation
- State of California Department of Fish and Game
- State of California regional Water Quality Control Board
- County Sanitation District-1
- County of Sacramento Department of Waste Management and Recycling
- County of Sacramento Water Agency
- County of Sacramento Planning and Community Development Department
- Rancho Cordova Police Department

The following summarizes the concerns in these letters.

- State Route (SR) 16 is referred to as the Jackson Highway on exhibit maps. This is a State facility.
- Impacts to the ramps and mainline of US 50 and SR 16 should be fully addressed.
- The Caltrans' System Planning Transportation Concept Reports should be adopted as part of the General Plan.
- The traffic study should provide enough detail that specific development will be able to assess their impacts and mitigate appropriately, thus reducing the need for additional traffic studies in the future.
- Establishment of fair share mitigation fee programs for traffic related impacts.
- The traffic study should include analysis of existing as well as cumulative conditions scenarios.
- The Circulation Element of the proposed General Plan should include road systems that parallel State roadways to accommodate local traffic.
- The General Plan Land Use, Circulation and Housing Elements should be internally consistent and compatible.
- Caltrans supports policies and strategies for affordable housing, high density zoning around transit centers, and Transit Oriented Development (TOD).
- Caltrans supports mixed-use development for livable communities with context sensitive solutions that allow expanded transportation options/choices and walkable neighborhoods.

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- Caltrans supports housing development that limits sprawl, facilitates infill development and encourages a jobs/housing and service/housing balance.
- The County as part of a recent expansion established a 2,000 foot buffer area around Keifer Landfill. Some parcels within the East Planning Area, the Grant Line North Planning Area and the Grant Line South Planning Area are affected by this boundary. The County requests that the City consider appropriate planning designations within the 2,000 foot buffer around the landfill.
- Neighborhood design: the City should include a "security ordinance" in the City Code, which will provide minimum safety and security specifications for new residential and commercial development. Adapt transit-oriented development guidelines to the needs of crime prevention to the extent possible.
- Pedestrian easements: prior to considering a pedestrian easement, a direct street connection between retail/commercial and residential areas should be evaluated.
- Subdivision/building conditions: applicants should be encouraged to develop neighborhoods that provide for "eyes on the street" (living areas such as kitchens, eating areas, living rooms, and office/den spaces should be located in the front of the residential unit). All homes placed a public roadway should be oriented to face the roadway.
- All public roadways should be developed to the specifications of the Fire Marshall.
- Law Enforcement Facilities: with the rapidly growing population in the City, additional Police Department facilities will be necessary.
- As residential development is approved, there should be a corresponding increase in patrol staffing to the Police Department to maintain a minimum staffing ratio of 1 officer per 1,000 population.
- The DEIR should describe the project setting in terms of the actual and potential agricultural productivity of the land. The Important Farmland Map for Sacramento County should be utilized to identify agricultural land within the project area and surrounding area that may be impacted.
- The Williamson Act maps should be utilized to identify potentially impacted farmland.
- Current and past agricultural uses of the project area should be identified.
- Use economic multipliers to assess the total contribution of the agricultural production for the project area.
- Evaluation of the impacts to fish and wildlife and their habitat should be addressed in the DEIR.
- Impacts on significant habitats such as wetlands should be addressed.
- Evaluation of potential impacts to special-status species and species identified as rare, threatened, or endangered should be addressed.

- Consistency with local and regional land use plans, such as Watershed Plans and Habitat Conservation Plans, should be addressed.
- Growth inducing impacts with respect to wildlife resources should be considered.
- The DEIR should analyze whether implementation of the General Plan will result in reasonably foreseeable potentially significant impacts subject to regulation by the Department of Fish and Game.
- Impacts to sewer infrastructure, with regards to the Sacramento County Sanitation District 1 (CSD-1) and Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District (SRCSD) systems, should be addressed.
- Discuss growth based on the availability of water supplies as delineated in the Water Forum Agreement.
- The DEIR should assess the availability of water supplies to support proposed growth in Rancho Cordova in the context of the groundwater contamination, which underlies much of the project area.
- Any planning activities outside the Rancho Cordova city limits should involve coordination with Sacramento County.
- The potential for wildland fires within preserve areas should be considered a significant impact in the DEIR.
- The tunnel designation proposed for Mather Field is not consistent the County's Transportation Plan or circulation plans adopted for the Mather Field Specific Plan.
- Review of the Water Forum EIR for consistency with Hydrology and Water Quality impacts.
- Mineral resources exist in the Planning Area and should be addressed in the DEIR.
- Air traffic impacts should be addressed in the transportation section of the DEIR because of the existence of Mather Field in the Planning Area.
- Discussion of future landfill issues should be included in the DEIR as the potential of loss of services and haul sites could occur.
- All projects over one acre in size must obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit.