
1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Recirculated Environmental Impact Report

Discretionary projects in California are required to undergo environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970 (California Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations Title 14, Section 15000 et seq. [14 CCR Section 15000 et seq.]). A discretionary project is defined as “a project which requires the exercise of judgment or deliberation when the public agency or body decides to approve or disapprove a particular activity” (State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15357).

This Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report (RDEIR) evaluates the impacts of constructing and operating the proposed Costco Warehouse and Fuel Facility, referred hereafter as the “proposed project.” The proposed project consists of construction and operation of a warehouse retail store and a fueling station on a 17.4¹-acre site at the southeast corner of the Sierra College Boulevard/Brace Road intersection in the Town of Loomis.

The Town of Loomis (Town), as the lead agency² under CEQA, prepared this EIR to disclose potential environmental impacts resulting from the implementation of the proposed project, and to identify ways to reduce significant impacts through alternatives and mitigation measures applied consistent with constitutional requirements such as the “nexus” and “rough proportionality” standards.³

A DEIR was circulated for this project in June 2018 (SCH#20170052077). The proposed project would have the same construction and operational characteristics as previously analyzed; however, due to comments on the 2018 DEIR relating to traffic and transportation concerns, the Town has made changes to the site plan to offer additional options for site access. This recirculated DEIR is intended to assist the public and decision-makers in understanding the implications of offering more access point options to the site. Refer to Section 1.2.4 for information on the recirculation process and the handling of comments received on the previously circulated DEIR.

After public review of the RDEIR, the Town will prepare a final recirculated EIR (FEIR), in which the Town will respond to comments regarding the analysis presented in the DEIR. Although the information in an EIR does not dictate the public agency’s ultimate discretion on the proposed project, the public agency must respond to each significant effect identified in the EIR by making findings under Section 15091 of the State CEQA Guidelines and, if necessary, by making a statement of overriding considerations under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15093. CEQA requires decision makers to balance the benefits of a project against its unavoidable environmental effects, if any, when they decide whether to approve a project.

1.2 Environmental Review Process

1.2.1 Preliminary Review

The Town received an application for development of a warehouse retail use along Sierra College Boulevard near the interchange with Interstate 80. Town staff reviewed the application and determined whether the proposed activity was a project subject to CEQA. The proposed project was found to clearly have the potential to impact the environment and staff elected to proceed directly to preparation of an EIR by issuing a Notice of Preparation (NOP) consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(d).

¹ The gross acreage of the project site is approximately 17.8 acres. Of this total, 0.4 acres is dedicated to public right-of-way.

² The lead agency is defined as the public agency with the greatest responsibility for supervising or approving the proposed project as a whole. The Town of Loomis is serving as lead agency for this project because it is responsible for approval of the discretionary permits.

³ CEQA case law establishes the requirement for mitigation to be linked with an identifiable impact (nexus) and be proportionate to the intensity of the impact (proportionality).

Due to the results of the first comment period, the Town has decided to recirculate the entire EIR for review, consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5.

1.2.2 Notice of Preparation

To initiate the EIR process, the Town circulated the NOP to solicit agency and public comments on the scope of the environmental analysis. The Town issued the NOP for this proposed project on May 15, 2017, and accepted comments for 30 days. The NOP was submitted to the Placer County Clerk and the State Clearinghouse of the Governor's Office of Planning and Research and was posted on the Town's website for a 30-day public review period.⁴ Appendix A of this EIR presents a copy of the NOP and the comments received during the NOP comment period.

Based on its review of existing information and the scoping process, the Town determined that the proposed project would have no impact, less-than-significant impacts, or less-than-significant impacts with mitigation related to the following resource areas:

- Agriculture and forestry resources
- Cultural resources, including tribal cultural resources
- Geology and soils
- Hazards and hazardous materials
- Hydrology and water quality
- Land use and planning
- Mineral resources
- Population and housing
- Public services
- Recreation
- Utilities and service systems
- Wildfire

These resource areas are discussed briefly in Section 5.3, "Effects Not Found to be Significant," in Chapter 5 of this RDEIR.

Impacts of the proposed project were determined to have potentially significant or significant impacts in the following resource areas:

- Aesthetics
- Air quality
- Biological resources
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Noise
- Transportation and traffic
- Energy

These topics are evaluated in Sections 3.2 through 3.8 of this RDEIR.

1.2.3 Public Review

When available for public review, the DEIR was submitted to the State Clearinghouse; posted on the Town's website (<https://loomis.ca.gov/>); and a copy was placed at the Loomis library. In addition, the DEIR was distributed directly to public agencies (including potential responsible and trustee agencies), interested parties, and organizations.

⁴ <https://loomis.ca.gov/>

A public meeting was held at the Blue Goose Conference Center on June 27, 2018, in order to receive input on the DEIR. The meeting was held during a joint session of the Loomis Planning Commission and City Council. The joint session was recorded, and a transcript was prepared.

Upon close of the review period, all comments received were reviewed and cataloged. A total of 30 comment letters were received from the public, responsible or trustee agencies, organizations and interested parties on the contents of the DEIR. Many of the comments provided opinions on vehicle traffic, points of access, removal of oak trees, and alternatives to the project under review. Based on public and agency comments received during the public review period, the applicant elected to revise the site plan to include an additional driveway from Brace Road, and an additional access option off a newly constructed segment of Granite Drive in order to improve vehicle circulation patterns and reduce queuing lengths. These options are provided in three Project Driveway Access Options: Option 1A; 1B; and 1C. The revised project is described in Chapter 2.0, "Project Description" and evaluated in Chapter 3.0 (Environmental Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures) through Chapter 6.0 (Alternatives).

1.2.4 Recirculation

According to 14 CCR § 15088.5, a lead agency is required to recirculate an EIR when significant new information is added to the EIR after public notice is given of the availability of the DEIR for public review but before certification. As used in this section, the term "information" can include changes in the project or environmental setting, as well as additional data or other information. New information added to an EIR is not "significant" unless the EIR is changed in a way that deprives the public of a meaningful opportunity to comment upon a substantial adverse environmental effect of the project or a feasible way to mitigate or avoid such an effect (including a feasible project alternative) that the project's proponents have declined to implement.

Because the revisions are considered to be substantial, the Town has concluded recirculation of the DEIR is necessary. This recirculated DEIR examines the direct and indirect physical effects of the revised project on the environment. In addition to the discussion of a revised site plan, changes to the EIR have been made in response to comments received during the initial public review and comment period.

When a lead agency decides to recirculate the entire EIR, formal responses are not required to address comments submitted on the original DEIR (section 15088.5[f]). In the case of the Costco DEIR, the Town has elected to recirculate the entire document. Therefore, no responses will be provided to comments submitted on the previously circulated DEIR. Consistent with the requirements of CEQA and Section 15088 of the CEQA Guidelines, a reasoned response to all comments on environmental issues raised on the recirculated DEIR will be provided in the FEIR. The information contained herein, as well as the information provided in the responses to comments will be considered by the Town when making the decision on the proposed project.

1.3 Type of Environmental Impact Report

CEQA provides a lead agency with the flexibility to prepare different types of EIRs, and to employ different procedural means to focus the environmental analysis on the issues appropriate for decision at each level of environmental review. CEQA provides that the "degree of specificity required in an EIR will correspond to the degree of specificity involved in the underlying activity which is described in the EIR" (State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15146).

The environmental analysis in this RDEIR has been prepared at a project level of detail. The proposed project is a construction-level approval. A project-level EIR "should focus primarily on the changes in the environment that would result from that development project ... [and] examine all phases of the project including planning, construction, and operation" (State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15161). No further environmental review of individual components of the proposed project is required unless a subsequent EIR or supplement to an EIR is required by Section 15162 or 15163 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

1.3.1 Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report

This DEIR is being recirculated for a public review period. Copies of the Recirculated DEIR are available through the Town of Loomis Planning Department. A copy of the Recirculated DEIR is also available online at the Town's Web site: <https://loomis.ca.gov/>. The Recirculated DEIR is circulated to public agencies, property owners, and other interested individuals for review and comment.

Comments on the Recirculated DEIR are invited and may be sent via U.S. Mail or e-mail to:

Anders Hauge
Town of Loomis
3665 Taylor Road
P.O. Box 1330
Loomis, CA 95650

CostcoComments@loomis.ca.gov

Comments should focus on the adequacy and completeness of the Recirculated DEIR or should address questions about the environmental consequences of project implementation. “Adequacy” is defined as the thoroughness of the Recirculated DEIR in addressing significant adverse physical environmental effects, identifying mitigation measures and/or alternatives for those impacts, and supplying enough information for public officials to make decisions about the merits of the project.

1.3.2 Final Environmental Impact Report

After the close of the public review period for the Recirculated DEIR, a response to comments document will be prepared, containing the comments on environmental issues received during the public review period, responses to those comments, and other information that the Town finds to be relevant. The response to comments document and the Recirculated DEIR together will compose the FEIR. The FEIR will be made available for review before the Town certifies it as complete.

If significant environmental effects are identified, a lead agency must adopt “findings” indicating whether feasible mitigation measures or alternatives exist that can avoid or reduce those effects. If the environmental impacts are identified as significant and unavoidable, the Town Council may still approve the proposed project if it determines that social, economic, legal, technological, or other factors override the unavoidable impacts. The Town would then be required to prepare a “statement of overriding considerations” discussing the specific reasons for approving the project, based on information in the EIR and other information in the record.

The Town Council is responsible for certifying that the EIR has been adequately prepared in compliance with CEQA. After certification, responsible agencies⁵ may use the EIR when they determine whether to approve any discretionary actions over which they have jurisdiction.

Pursuant to Section 15097 of the State CEQA Guidelines, if the Town Council approves the proposed project and the EIR identifies significant impacts and mitigation measures, the Town must adopt a mitigation monitoring and reporting program (MMRP). The purpose of the MMRP is to ensure compliance with required mitigation during implementation of the project. An MMRP defines the requirements for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of project revisions, or for compliance with mitigation measures that the lead agency has required as conditions of project approval. The MMRP will be prepared concurrently with the FEIR.

1.4 Organization and Content of this Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report

The content and format of this Recirculated DEIR meets the requirements of CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR Sections 15122–15132). This Recirculated DEIR is organized into chapters, as identified below.

- The **Executive Summary** presents an overview of the proposed project and alternatives and their associated environmental impacts; shows the project’s environmental impacts, mitigation measures, and significance after mitigation in tabular format; and describes known areas of controversy and issues to be resolved.
- **Chapter 1, “Introduction,”** explains the CEQA process and opportunities for public participation, outlines the organization of the Recirculated DEIR, and describes the intended use of the EIR.
- **Chapter 2, “Project Description,”** describes the project site location, the objectives of the proposed project, and project characteristics, including facility operations and construction; identifies required permits and

⁵ A responsible agency is a public agency other than the lead agency that has discretionary approval power over the project.

approvals; and lists the lead, responsible, and trustee agencies⁶ that may have discretionary authority over the project.

- **Chapter 3, “Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures,”** presents the following topical discussions relevant to the impact analysis for the proposed project:
 - The introduction to Chapter 3 provides an overview of the environmental setting and definitions of the types of environmental impacts.
 - Section 3.1, “Regional Environmental Setting,” describes the character of the project site from a regional perspective, with emphasis on regional plans and policies that pertain to the proposed project.
 - Each remaining section of Chapter 3 (Aesthetics, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Greenhouse Gases, Noise, and Transportation and Traffic, and Energy) is devoted to a particular environmental impact area. Each section describes the baseline or existing conditions, the regulatory setting, methodology, and thresholds of significance for the particular impact area, and then presents an analysis of direct and indirect impacts of the proposed project. Mitigation measures are identified that would avoid, eliminate, or reduce potentially significant or significant impacts to a less-than-significant level, where such measures are available and feasible.
- **Chapter 4, “Cumulative Impacts,”** discusses cumulative impacts that could result from the proposed project when considered in combination with other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable projects in the area.
- **Chapter 5, “Other CEQA Requirements,”** addresses the potential for the proposed project to foster economic or population growth, or to remove obstacles to growth; identifies any significant and unavoidable adverse impacts that would result from project implementation; and discusses any irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources that could be caused by the proposed project. Section 5.3, “Effects Found Not to Be Significant,” in Chapter 5 explains why the proposed project would have no impact, less-than-significant impacts, or less-than-significant impacts with mitigation on agriculture and forestry resources, cultural resources, including tribal cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, recreation, wildfire, and utilities and service systems.
- **Chapter 6, “Alternatives,”** describes a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project (consistent with Section 15126.6[a] of the State CEQA Guidelines) that are feasible (i.e., may be accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time) and would lessen significant effects of the project, taking into account economic, environmental, social, and technological factors.
- **Chapter 7, “References,”** provides a bibliography of sources cited in the Recirculated DEIR and identifies the names and affiliations of persons who provided information used in preparing the document.
- **Chapter 8, “Preparers,”** identifies individuals who were involved in preparing this Recirculated DEIR.
- **Appendices** to this DEIR present all notices and other procedural documents pertinent to the Recirculated DEIR, as well as technical material prepared to support the analysis. A hard copy of the appendices to the Draft Recirculated DEIR will be available for public review at the Town Hall.

⁶ A trustee agency is a state agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by a project, which are held in trust for the people of the State of California.

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