

6. CEQA-Required Conclusions and Findings

This chapter provides an overview of the impacts of the proposed project based on the analyses presented in Chapters 4.1 through 4.18 of this Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The topics covered in this chapter include growth-inducing impacts and significant irreversible changes to the environment. A more detailed analysis of the effects that the proposed project would have on the environment, and proposed mitigation measures to minimize significant impacts, are provided in Chapter 4, Environmental Analysis, of this Draft EIR.

6.1 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

Section 15126.2(b) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires that “direct and indirect significant effects of the project on the environment shall be clearly identified and described, giving due consideration to both the short- and long-term effects.” Chapter 2, Executive Summary, contains Table 2-1, which summarizes the significant impacts, mitigation measures, and levels of significance with and without mitigation. While actions from the proposed project and mitigation measures, where feasible, would reduce the level of impact to less than significant, the following impacts would remain significant and unavoidable after mitigation measures are applied. As detailed in Chapters 4.3, Air Quality, Chapter 4.8, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Chapter 4.16, Transportation, of this Draft EIR, environmental impacts associated with the proposed project were found to be significant and unavoidable, as listed:

- **Impact AIR-2.2:** Operational activities associated with potential future development could cumulatively contribute to the non-attainment designations of the San Francisco Bay Area Air Basin.
- **Impact AIR-3.2.** Operational activities associated with potential future development could expose sensitive receptors to substantial toxic air contaminant concentrations from nonpermitted sources.
- **Impact CULT-1.** Future development in San Rafael on sites that contain a historic resource may cause the demolition, destruction, or alteration of a historic resource such that the significance of the resource is "materially impaired." Such adverse changes or potential adverse changes in the significance of a CEQA-defined historic resource would constitute a significant impact.
- **Impact GHG-1:** Implementation of the proposed project may not meet the long-term GHG reduction goal under Executive Order S-03-05. (This is a cumulative impact).
- **Impact TRAN-1a** Implementation of the proposed project would result in a significant land use VMT impact for Total VMT and Work VMT due to forecast land use growth through 2040, based on a comparison of the VMT rate increment for Total VMT Per Service Population and Work VMT Per Employee to the corresponding average baseline rates for the full nine-county Bay Area.

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- **Impact TRAN-1b:** Implementation of the proposed project would result in a significant road network VMT impact due to the planned capacity of the roadway system.
- **Impact TRAN-6:** Implementation of the proposed project would cumulatively contribute to regional VMT.

6.2 GROWTH-INDUCEMENT

Section 15126.2(d) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR discuss the 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. Typical growth-inducing factors might be the extension of urban services or transportation infrastructure to a previously unserved or under-served area, or the removal of major barriers to development.

This section evaluates the proposed project's potential to create such growth inducements. As CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) requires, "[it] must not be assumed that growth in an area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment." In other words, negative impacts associated with growth inducement occur only where the projected growth would cause significant adverse environmental impacts.

Growth-inducing impacts fall into two general categories: direct or indirect. Direct growth-inducing impacts are generally associated with providing urban services to an undeveloped area. Indirect, or secondary growth-inducing impacts consist of growth induced in the region by additional demands for housing, goods, and services associated with the population increase caused by, or attracted to, a new project.

Further, while implementation of the proposed project would induce growth, as discussed in detail in Chapter 4.14, Population and Housing, of this Draft EIR, the proposed project would be consistent with the regional planning objectives established for the Bay Area. While the project itself implements goals, policies, and programs to accommodate the project's projected growth, it would exceed the current population and household forecasts as projected by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). However, ABAG prepares forecasts of the region's population and employment every two to four years. Amongst other sources, ABAG's projections take into account local planning documents for the nine-county region, such as the City of San Rafael's General Plan. As such, while the proposed project exceeds the regional projections, both the General Plan and regional forecasts are long-range planning tools that assist local governments to identify policies that address changing environments. Accordingly, following adoption of the proposed project, the regional forecasts would take into account the new growth potential for San Rafael; thus, bringing the two long-range planning tools into better alignment. Additionally, this additional growth would come incrementally over a period of approximately 20 years and a policy framework is in place to ensure adequate planning occurs to accommodate it. The proposed project results in mixed-use development near transportation facilities and employment centers and implements energy and water conservation requirements related to existing and new development, thereby minimizing consumption of non-renewable resources to the extent practicable.

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6.2.1 DIRECT IMPACTS

The proposed project is a plan-level document and does not propose any specific development; however, implementation of the proposed project would induce growth by increasing the development potential in the EIR Study Area, as shown in Tables 3-6 and 3-7 in Chapter 3, Project Description, of this Draft EIR.

As shown in Table 3-6, the 2040 forecast for the EIR Study Area is 32,382 households; 33,989 residential units; 84,661 total population, and 48,315 employees. As shown in Table 3-7, the forecast for the Downtown Precise Plan Area is 3,596 households; 3,771 residential units; 5,885 total population, and 13,020 employees.

State law requires the City to promote the production of housing to meet its fair share of the regional housing needs distribution made by ABAG. While the City provides adequate sites to meet its fair-share housing obligations, the additional housing capacity provided by the project would meet the additional demand generated by new job growth.

In addition, as shown on Figure 4-1 (see Chapter 4, Environmental Analysis), the EIR Study Area has three PDAs and three TPAs. The proposed General Plan 2040 is anticipating that these areas will absorb most of the City's future growth. The growth envisioned under the proposed project would result in regional benefits by promoting growth that encourages less automobile dependence and supports regional transit systems, which could have associated air quality and GHG benefits. Encouraging infill growth in designated areas would help to reduce development pressures on lands outside the city boundary.

6.2.2 INDIRECT IMPACTS

The proposed project is considered growth inducing because it encourages new growth in the urbanized areas of San Rafael. Development in these areas would consist of infill development on underutilized sites, sites that have been previously developed, and that are vacant and have been determined to be suitable for development. However, infrastructure is largely in place and growth would be required to comply with the City's General Plan, zoning regulations, and standards for public services and utilities; secondary effects associated with this growth do not represent a new significant environmental impact which has not already been addressed in the individual resource chapters of this EIR.

Additional population and employment growth would occur incrementally over a period of approximately 20 years and would be consistent with the regional planning objectives established for the Bay Area.

6.3 SIGNIFICANT AND IRREVERSIBLE CHANGES

Section 15126.2(c) of the CEQA Guidelines requires an EIR to discuss the extent to which the proposed project would commit nonrenewable resources to uses that future generations would probably be unable to reverse. The three CEQA-required categories of irreversible changes are discussed herein.

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6.3.1 CHANGES IN LAND USE THAT COMMIT FUTURE GENERATIONS

As described in detail in Chapter 3, Project Description, of this Draft EIR, the proposed project generally maintains the land use pattern of the existing General Plan. While new land uses are not introduced in the proposed project, development is encouraged in existing urban areas, particularly in the Downtown Precise Plan Area. The current General Plan provided development allocations for buildout of the city through the year 2020. The proposed project includes increased density and heights in the Downtown Precise Plan Area, but such future development under the proposed project would be located on land that is generally urbanized or on infill sites and sites in developed areas that are underutilized. However, some potential future development may occur on vacant non-urban sites which are already designated for development. Once future development under the proposed project occurs, it would not be feasible to return the developed land to its existing (pre-project) condition. Therefore, there is potential that some of the development allowed under the proposed project would most likely lead to irreversible changes in land use.

6.3.2 IRREVERSIBLE DAMAGE FROM ENVIRONMENTAL ACCIDENTS

Irreversible changes to the physical environment could occur from accidental release of hazardous materials associated with development activities; however, compliance with the applicable regulations and General Plan goals, policies, and programs and implementation of Mitigation Measures HAZ-4a and HAZ-4b, and HAZ-8, as discussed in Chapter 4.9, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, would reduce this potential impact to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, irreversible damage is not expected to result from the adoption and implementation of the proposed project.

6.3.3 LARGE COMMITMENT OF NONRENEWABLE RESOURCES

Implementation of development allowed under the proposed project would result in the commitment of limited, renewable resources such as lumber and water. In addition, development allowed by the proposed project would irretrievably commit nonrenewable resources for the construction of buildings, infrastructure, and roadway improvements. These nonrenewable resources include mined minerals such as sand, gravel, steel, lead, copper, and other metals. Future buildout under implementation of the proposed project also represents a long-term commitment to the consumption of fossil fuels, natural gas, and gasoline. Increased energy demands would be used for construction, lighting, heating, and cooling of residences, and transportation of people within, to, and from San Rafael. However, as shown in Chapter 4.5, Energy, and in Section 4.17.1, Water, and Section 4.17.4, Solid Waste, of Chapter 4.17, Utilities and Service Systems, of this Draft EIR, several regulatory measures and General Plan policies and strategies encourage energy and water conservation, alternative energy use, waste reduction, alternatives to automotive transportation, and green building. Future development, as a result of increased development allocation under the proposed project, would be required to comply with all applicable building and design requirements, including those set forth in Title 24 relating to energy conservation. In compliance with CALGreen, the State's Green Building Standards Code, future development would be

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required to reduce water consumption by 20 percent, divert 50 percent of construction waste from landfills, and install low pollutant-emitting materials. Therefore, while the construction and operation of future development, as a result of increased development allocations under the proposed project, would involve the use of nonrenewable resources, compliance with applicable standards and regulations and implementation of General Plan policies would reduce the use of nonrenewable resources to the maximum extent practicable; therefore, the proposed project would not represent a large commitment of nonrenewable resources in comparison to a business-as-usual situation.

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