

## CHAPTER 4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS

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### 4.0.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS

#### Scope of the EIR Analysis

This chapter of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) discusses the environmental and regulatory setting, impacts, and mitigation measures for each of the following technical issue areas (Sections 4.1 through 4.10):

- 4.1 Air Quality and Climate Change
- 4.2 Biological Resources
- 4.3 Cultural Resources
- 4.4 Hazards and Public Safety
- 4.5 Hydrology, Water Quality, and Drainage
- 4.6 Noise and Vibration
- 4.7 Public Services and Recreation
- 4.8 Public Utilities
- 4.9 Transportation and Circulation
- 4.10 Urban Design and Visual Resources

#### Environmental Setting

According to subdivision (a) of Section 15125 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, an EIR must include a description of the existing physical environmental condition in the vicinity of the project as they exist at the time when the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published. This “environmental setting” will normally constitute the “baseline condition” against which project-related impacts are compared. Therefore, the baseline conditions for this Draft EIR, unless noted otherwise, are based on conditions that existed in May 2013, when the NOP was published. The CEQA Guidelines recognize that the data for establishing an environmental baseline cannot be rigid. Because physical environmental conditions may vary over a range of time, the use of environmental baselines that differ from the date of the NOP is reasonable and appropriate in certain circumstances when doing so results in a more accurate or conservative environmental analysis.

For analytical purposes, impacts associated with implementation of the proposed McKinley Village Project (proposed project) are compared against two different baselines: first, project-specific effects are assessed against existing conditions at the time the NOP was first published; and second, cumulative effects are assessed against future, or “cumulative,” conditions, generally defined as buildout of the City of Sacramento 2030 General Plan. Existing conditions and the cumulative baseline can differ by issue area. Each technical section defines the existing conditions and cumulative baseline for the impacts being analyzed.

In determining the level of significance of environmental impacts associated with the proposed project, the analysis in this Draft EIR assumes that the proposed project would comply with relevant federal and state laws and regulations, and City of Sacramento General Plan policies, ordinances, and other adopted City documents, unless otherwise noted. Therefore, such mandatory policies, ordinances, and standards are not identified as mitigation measures, but rather are discussed as part of the “Regulatory Setting” governing the proposed project.

### **Project Description**

The proposed project includes, among other things, development of 328 residential units on the approximately 48.75-acre project site. As part of the project some of the home plans include an option for homeowners to expand over the garage to add an additional 412 square feet (sf) of living space. It is not known how many homeowners would choose this option, but it also allows the homeowner to expand in the future if the need arises. It is envisioned this space may be used as a “granny flat”, another bedroom or office space. For the purposes of the EIR analysis, this option does not change the overall footprint of the project and the area of disturbance; therefore, this optional space is not factored into the analysis and the EIR evaluates development and operation of 328 residential units. However, for the purposes of the traffic analysis it was determined that this optional space may generate a small number of vehicle trips. Thus, for the purposes of traffic planning the City factored in an additional 40 units in determining the project’s overall trip generation rate. This assumes a very conservative approach to calculate potential traffic impacts, but given the community’s concern regarding traffic the City wanted to ensure all potential project traffic was captured in the analysis.

For those technical issues areas where impacts are generated based on population, number of housing units, or overall project operation (e.g., air quality, public services and public utilities) the additional 40 units were not included as part of the project because this space is essentially considered an extension of the home and would not have separate electrical, water or wastewater connections. Therefore, for the purposes of this EIR development of 328 residential units was evaluated (with the exception of traffic).

### **Environmental Section Format**

Each technical section in Chapter 4 begins with an **introduction** that explains the issues to be evaluated, provides a general summary of comments received in response to the NOP, and identifies the primary sources reviewed to prepare the analysis. The introduction is followed by a description of the project’s **environmental setting** and **regulatory setting** as it pertains to a particular issue.

The regulatory setting provides a summary of applicable federal, state, and local regulations, plans, policies, and laws that are relevant to each issue area. The regulatory setting description in each section is followed by a discussion of **project-specific impacts**. The project-specific impacts discussion is followed by an analysis of the **cumulative impacts** of the project. This section addresses what the project’s incremental contribution to any cumulatively significant

impacts would be and identifies mitigation measures, if required. The impact statement is prefaced by a number for ease of identification. An explanation of each impact and an analysis of its significance follow each impact statement. All **mitigation measures** are identified immediately following the impact analysis. The degree to which the identified mitigation measure(s) would reduce the impact is also described. Compliance with applicable laws, policies, and City regulations is assumed and will be identified in the impact analysis. In many cases, compliance with applicable laws, policies, or regulations would reduce the significance of an impact.

An example of an impact statement is shown below.

**4.1-1: Implementation of the proposed project could expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollution concentrations. Based on the analysis below and with implementation of mitigation the impact is *less than significant*. (The significance finding is included in each impact statement).**

A discussion of potential impacts of the proposed project is presented in paragraph form. The project-specific impacts associated with construction and operation of the project are evaluated and compared to the threshold of significance for the particular impact. The analysis discusses the applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations that would reduce impacts, and assumes that the project would comply with applicable laws, ordinances, and regulations, and that the project applicant would obtain all necessary permits and comply with all required conditions of those permits. In many instances, the actions that are necessary to reduce a project impact are already required by existing laws or requirements. The impact analysis concludes with a determination of the impact's significance in **bold type** (e.g., **significant impact, significant and unavoidable impact, potentially significant impact, less-than-significant impact, or no impact**).

### **Mitigation Measures**

A discussion of the applicable mitigation measures identified to reduce the significance of an impact will immediately follow the impact analysis.

This section includes a statement indicating whether the mitigation measure will reduce the impact to a **less-than-significant level** or if the impact remains **significant and unavoidable** due to the absence of any available mitigation that could reduce the impact below the applicable threshold. A discussion of how the mitigation would reduce the impact is included before the mitigation measure.

Mitigation measures, if applicable, are numbered and presented in the following format.

**4.1-1** Statement of what, if any, mitigation measures are required.

Note that CEQA Guidelines, Section 15370, defines mitigation as:

- Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action;
- Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree of magnitude of the action and its implementation;
- Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment;
- Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and
- Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

In addition, provided there is a “reasonable plan for mitigation” and contributions are “sufficiently tied to the actual mitigation” of the project’s impacts, a commitment to contribute a fair share to such a program discharges an agency’s mitigation duty under CEQA (*Save Our Peninsula Com. v. Monterey County Bd. of Supervisors* 2001) 87 Cal.App.4th 99, 141); see also CEQA Guidelines, Section 15130, subd. (a)(3) ([recognizing that a project’s contribution to a cumulative impact may be less than cumulatively considerable where “the project is required to implement or fund its fair share of a mitigation measure or measures designed to alleviate the cumulative impact”] see also *Anderson First Coalition v. City of Anderson*(2005) 130 Cal.App.4th 1173).

### **Cumulative Impacts**

An analysis of cumulative impacts follows the evaluation of project impacts under existing conditions in each section in Chapter 4. As defined in CEQA Guidelines, Section 15355, cumulative impacts refer to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts. The cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment which results from the incremental impact of the project together with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects causing related impacts. An introductory statement that defines the cumulative analysis methodology and the cumulative context being analyzed for respective sections (e.g., buildout of the City’s General Plan, development within the Sacramento Valley Air Basin) is included under the “Cumulative Analysis” discussion. In some instances, a project-specific impact may be considered less than significant, but would be considered potentially significant in combination with other development within the surrounding area. Or, in some instances, a potentially significant impact could result on a project level, but would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact. The cumulative impacts analysis is presented in the same format as the impacts section, shown above.

#### 4.0.2 TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE EIR

This Draft EIR uses the following terminology to describe environmental effects of the proposed project:

- **Thresholds of Significance:** A set of criteria used by the lead agency to determine at what level or “threshold” an impact would be considered significant. Standards of significance used in this Draft EIR include those set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15065 (Mandatory Findings of Significance) and those derived from questions set forth in Appendix G to the CEQA Guidelines; criteria based on regulatory standards of local, state, and federal agencies; and criteria based on goals and policies identified in the City of Sacramento 2030 General Plan. In fashioning criteria based on these sources, City staff has also relied on its own professional judgment and experience in some instances. In determining the level of significance, the analysis assumes that the proposed project would comply with relevant federal, state, and local regulations and ordinances.
- **Less-than-Significant Impact:** A project impact is considered less than significant when it does not reach the standard of significance, indicating that there would be no substantial change in the environment. No mitigation is required for less-than-significant impacts.
- **Potentially Significant Impact:** A potentially significant impact is an environmental effect that could cause a substantial adverse change in the environment; however, additional information is needed regarding the extent of the impact to make the determination of significance. For CEQA purposes, a potentially significant impact is treated as if it were a significant impact.
- **Significant Impact:** A project impact is considered significant if it results in a substantial adverse change in the physical conditions of the environment. Significant impacts are identified by the evaluation of project effects in the context of specified significance criteria. When available, potentially feasible mitigation measures and/or project alternatives are identified to reduce these effects to the environment.
- **Cumulative Impact:** According to CEQA, “cumulative impacts refer to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts” (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15355). CEQA requires that cumulative impacts be discussed when the “project’s incremental effect is cumulatively considerable” (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15130 (a)).

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