
1.0 – INTRODUCTION

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) assesses the expected environmental impacts resulting from adoption of the proposed Redevelopment Plan and designation of the Redevelopment Project Area. These two actions constitute the "proposed project" addressed in this EIR. This DEIR was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines Section 15000 et seq. The Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Rancho Cordova (Agency) is the lead agency for the environmental review of the proposed Rancho Cordova Redevelopment Plan (Plan) and Redevelopment Project Area (Project Area) evaluated herein, and has the principal responsibility for approving the project.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE EIR

The Agency has prepared this Draft EIR to provide the public, decision makers, responsible and trustee agencies with information about the potential environmental effects of the proposed project. As described in the 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 significant impacts.

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 Redevelopment Plan, the Agency has determined that the proposed Redevelopment Plan and designation of the Redevelopment Project Area are a "project" within the definition of CEQA. A full project description is presented in Section 3.0 of this DEIR.

1.2 KNOWN RESPONSIBLE AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

For the purpose of CEQA, 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.

The following agencies are identified as potential Responsible Agencies and are expected to use the EIR in their decision-making:

- City of Rancho Cordova

The following agencies will be responsible for granting approvals for the Plan or in the Project Area:

- Sacramento County Air Quality Management District
- Sacramento County Water Agency
- Department of Parks, Recreation and Open Space
- Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District
- Folsom Cordova Unified School District
- Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Caltrans District 3
- Caltrans Division of Aeronautics
- California Department of Conservation
- Native American Heritage Commission
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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The following trustee agencies have jurisdiction of natural resources affected by the Plan or in the Project Area:

- California Department of Fish and Game

1.3 TYPE OF EIR

The 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 as follows:

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.*

CEQA REQUIREMENTS FOR REDEVELOPMENT PLANS

Section 15180 of the CEQA Guidelines addresses the environmental documentation requirements for redevelopment plans and future redevelopment actions taken pursuant to a redevelopment plan. Section 15180(a) states that, "All public and private activities or undertakings pursuant to or in furtherance of a redevelopment plan constitute a single project, which shall be deemed approved at the time of adoption of the redevelopment plan by the legislative body." Section 15180(b) states that, "An EIR on a redevelopment plan shall be treated as a program EIR with no subsequent EIRs required for individual components of the redevelopment plan unless a subsequent EIR or supplement to an EIR would be required by Section 15162 or 15163."

1.4 INTENDED USES OF THE EIR

This EIR is intended to evaluate the environmental impacts of adoption of the Redevelopment Plan and the designation of the Redevelopment Project Area to the greatest extent possible. The EIR describes the cumulative effects of the buildout of the Project Area consistent with the Rancho Cordova General Plan.

As set forth under CEQA, the scope of this program EIR is limited to the description of those project related impacts and mitigation measures that can be identified at this time, without being highly speculative. Consistent with CEQA's timing principles, the detailed impacts of future individual, site-specific, infrastructure, industrial, commercial, and residential development actions (subsequent activities) that are not specifically described in the proposed Plan, but may occur within the Project Area at some future time, pursuant to or facilitated by the Redevelopment Plan, are not described in this program EIR. Rather, CEQA review of such subsequent activities will be undertaken at a later time, if and when such actions come before

the City or Agency in the form of a specific development application or City/Agency initiated project. At that time, when details of the subsequent activity are sufficiently defined, the subsequent activity will be subject to its own, project-specific, environmental determination by the City or Agency. This determination will indicate whether the subsequent activity is either:

- Fully covered within the scope of this program EIR (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168[e]); or,
- Warrants preparation of a subsequent negative declaration or EIR declaration under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(d):

The adoption of the Redevelopment Plan and the designation of the Redevelopment Project Area will facilitate buildout of the City of Rancho Cordova consistent with the City's General Plan. Rancho Cordova is in a unique situation with regards to the City's General Plan. The City is currently operating under an interim General Plan, for which an EIR has not been certified as allowed for under Government Code Section 65360(b). Therefore, the potential effects associated with build-out of the Redevelopment Project Area, consistent with the General Plan, are addressed in this EIR. A more detailed description of the proposed project's relationship to the Rancho Cordova General Plan is provided in Section 3.0 of this EIR. Adoption of the City's first General Plan is anticipated to occur in June 2006.

1.5 ORGANIZATION

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. The environmental issues addressed in the Draft EIR were established through review of environmental documentation developed for the project, environmental documentation for nearby projects, and responses to the Notice of Preparation.

This Draft EIR is organized in the following manner:

SECTION 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Section 1.0 provides an introduction and overview describing the intended use of the EIR and the review and certification process.

SECTION 2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section summarizes the characteristics of the proposed project and provides a concise summary matrix of the project's environmental impacts, consistency with adopted policies, possible mitigation measures, alternatives to the project that reduce significant effects, and identifies areas of controversy and issues to be resolved.

SECTION 3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This section provides a detailed description of the proposed project, including objectives, background information, and physical and technical characteristics.

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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 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 environmental topics are addressed in this section:

- Land Use and Agricultural Resources
- Population, Housing, and Employment
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Transportation and Circulation
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Geology, Soils and Mineral Resources
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Public Services and Utilities
- Recreation
- Visual Resources

SECTION 5.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY

This section discusses the 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 effect is cumulatively considerable.

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 most of the basic objectives of the project and avoid and/or lessen the significant environmental effects of the project. This alternatives analysis provides a comparative analysis between 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, or were consulted, in the preparation of the report 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.

REFERENCES

References used for preparation of the technical sections of this EIR are listed at the end of the respective sections. All references will be made available at the Rancho Cordova City Hall upon request.

1.6 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The review and certification process for the EIR will involve the following general procedural steps:

NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND INITIAL STUDY

In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the Agency prepared a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR for the project on December 19, 2005. The Agency was identified as the Lead Agency for the proposed project. This notice was circulated to the public, local, State, and Federal agencies, and other interested parties to solicit comments on the proposed project and its potential environmental effects. A scoping meeting was held on January 10, 2006, 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 A**. Also, 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 A**. Consistent with Section 15128 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the Initial Study documents project effects that were determined not to be significant.

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. Upon completion of the Draft EIR, the Agency will file the Notice of Completion (NOC) with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research. (Public Resources Code, Section 21161).

PUBLIC NOTICE/PUBLIC REVIEW

Concurrent with the NOC, the Agency 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. The review period is forty-five 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 Agency expects to hold a public comment meeting during the forty-five day review period prior to EIR certification. Notice of the 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:

Hilary Anderson
City of Rancho Cordova
2729 Prospect Park Drive
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

Comments may also be submitted by email to: reddevelopmentplan@cityofranhocordova.org.

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RESPONSE TO COMMENTS/FINAL EIR

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

CERTIFICATION OF THE EIR/PROJECT CONSIDERATION

The Agency will review and consider the Final EIR. If the Agency finds that the Final EIR is "adequate and complete", the Agency will certify the Final EIR. Upon review and consideration of the Final EIR, the Agency may take action to approve, revise, or reject the project. A decision to approve the project would be accompanied by written findings in accordance with 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 environment. This Mitigation Monitoring Program will be designed to ensure that these measures are carried out during project implementation.

MITIGATION MONITORING PROGRAM

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 the Agency 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 TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR uses the following terminology:

- **Redevelopment Plan (Plan):** The Redevelopment Plan is the legal document setting forth the basic goals, powers and limitations within which the Agency must conduct its activities over the life of the Rancho Cordova Redevelopment Project.
- **Redevelopment Project Area (Project Area):** The Redevelopment Project Area consists of approximately 2,578 acres of land within the incorporated City limits of Rancho Cordova. The Project Area has been identified as areas within the City that currently exhibit blight conditions. The Project Area is described in greater detail in Section 3.0 of this EIR.
- **Proposed Project:** Adoption of the Redevelopment Plan and designation of the Redevelopment Project Area constitute the Proposed Project addressed in this EIR.
- **General Plan:** The City of Rancho Cordova is currently operating under an interim General Plan pursuant to Government Code Section 65360. The interim policies and diagrams associated with the development of the new Rancho Cordova General Plan will guide land use and circulation in the City until adoption of its new General Plan. Throughout this EIR, the term 'General Plan' refers to the proposed draft General Plan that is pending adoption. Adoption of the new General Plan is expected to occur in June 2006.

- **Cumulatively Considerable:** A cumulatively considerable condition would result when the project would contribute significantly to a physical impact on the environment expected under cumulative conditions as set forth in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130. A cumulatively considerable condition is treated similar to “significant impact” identified for project impacts.
- **Less Than Significant Impact:** A less than significant impact would cause no substantial change in the physical condition of the environment. No mitigation is required for project effects found to be less than significant.
- **Significant Impact:** A significant impact would cause (or would potentially cause) a substantial adverse change in the physical conditions of the environment. Significant impacts are identified by the evaluation of project effects using specified standards of significance provided in each technical section of the EIR. Identified “significant” impacts are those where the project would result in an impact that can be measured or quantified, while identified “potentially significant” impacts are those impacts where an exact measurement of the project’s effect cannot be made but substantial evidence indicates that the impact would exceed standards of significance. A potentially significant impact may also be an impact that may or may not occur and where a definite determination cannot be foreseen. Mitigation measures and/or project alternatives are identified to avoid or reduce to a less than significant level project effects to the environment.
- **Significant Unavoidable Impact:** A significant and unavoidable impact would result in a substantial change in the environment that cannot be avoided or mitigated to a less than significant level if the project is implemented.
- **Standards of Significance:** A set of significance criteria used by the CEQA lead agency as well as by other public agencies with regulatory jurisdiction over the project to determine at what level or “threshold” an impact would be considered significant. Significance criteria used in this EIR include the State CEQA Guidelines; factual or scientific information; regulatory performance standards of local, State, and Federal agencies; and, City goals, objectives, and policies. Specified significance criteria are identified at the beginning of the impact analyses of each technical section of the EIR.
- **Subsequent Projects:** Anticipated development projects (e.g., residential, commercial, park, recreational) that would occur under the Redevelopment Plan. This would include public and utility extension projects including, but not limited to, roadway widenings and extensions, intersection improvements, water distribution improvements and trail extensions. The term “subsequent projects” is consistent with the provisions of State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(c) associated with “subsequent activities.”

1.8 COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE NOTICE OF PREPARATION

The Agency received comment letters on the Notice of Preparation for the Rancho Cordova Redevelopment Plan DEIR. A copy of each letter is provided in **Appendix A** of this DEIR. The Agency received letters from the following State and local agencies, and other interested parties.

- Sacramento County Department of Transportation (January 5, 2005);
- Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District (January 5, 2006); and
- Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (January 17, 2006).