
4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND ASSUMPTIONS USED

The following is an introduction to the environmental analysis of the project-specific and cumulative impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed General Plan. This introduction describes the general assumptions used in the analysis. The reader is referred to the individual technical sections of the Draft EIR (Sections 4.1 to 4.13) regarding the specific assumptions and methodologies used in the analysis for that particular technical subject.

ANALYSIS ASSUMPTIONS GENERALLY USED TO EVALUATE THE IMPACTS OF THE CITY OF RANCHO CORDOVA GENERAL PLAN

BASELINE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS ASSUMED IN THE DRAFT EIR

Section 15125(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of a project, as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published. The CEQA Guidelines also specify that this description of the physical environmental conditions should serve as the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether the impacts of a project are considered significant.

The environmental setting conditions of the City of Rancho Cordova and the surrounding area are described in detail in the individual technical sections of the Draft EIR (see Sections 4.1 through 4.13). In general, these sections describe the setting conditions of the City of Rancho Cordova and the surrounding area, as they existed when the NOP for the project was released on February 25, 2005. In addition, the Draft EIR also includes setting information that has been updated since release of the NOP, such as the status of large-scale development projects in the General Plan Planning Area (see **Table 4.0-1**).

BUILDOUT ASSUMPTIONS UNDER THE GENERAL PLAN ASSOCIATED WITH THE PLANNING AREA

Future growth in the General Plan Planning Area is guided by the land uses identified in the General Plan Land Use Map (see **Figures 3.0-3** through **3.0-18**). The Draft EIR impact analysis (both temporary [i.e. construction-related] and operational effects) is based on these proposed land use patterns, including proposed transportation improvements identified in the proposed Circulation Plan (and shown in **Figures 3.0-19** through **3.0-21**). The Draft EIR also evaluates the indirect environmental effects of construction and operation of the land uses and transportation improvements in the proposed General Plan.

Table 3.0-1 and **3.0-2** specifically identify post-2030 maximum buildout conditions of the City and Planning Area under the proposed General Plan, which consists of 126,241 residential units (resulting in a projected population of 310,568) and total employment of 195,021 (71,209,788 square feet of associated commercial, office and industrial development projected). This buildout condition has been applied to the Planning Areas and is identified in **Table 3.0-3**. As noted in Section 3.0 (Project Description), these buildout projections are based on detailed land use modeling (City of Rancho Cordova PLACE³S Land Use Model) and were refined by fiscal and retail/office market demand analyses for the Planning Area (referred to hereafter as the "Proforma") (see City of Rancho Cordova City Council Staff Reports – Findings of the Market Analysis/Retail Strategy, December 19, 2005, Revisions to the Draft General Plan Land Use Map, January 3, 2006 and Adoption of Revised Land Use Map Book, January 17, 2006). The Proforma also analyzed projected revenues and expenditures related to future development, capital improvements and services needed for the City to accommodate growth, and how the rate and form of growth would impact the fiscal viability of the City.

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PLACE³S is a geographic information system (GIS) software tool developed by the State of California Energy Commission in partnership with the Oregon Department of Energy and the Washington State Energy Office. PLACE³S stands for Planning for Community Energy, Economic, and Environmental Sustainability. The system was originally designed to help jurisdictions enhance the sustainability of their communities, but in recent years, as the software has been further developed and refined, local and regional agencies have been using it to evaluate growth scenarios and the associated impacts. PLACE³S is unique from other GIS mapping tools (including the City's existing GIS system) in that the data is dynamic. When land use categories are applied to a parcel, development characteristics, including dwelling units per acre and employees per acre are also applied. PLACE³S then runs a detailed set of calculations on every parcel in the project to determine the total number of dwelling units, jobs per sector, and building square footage by sector. Because PLACES is geographically based, data can be summarized for sub-areas within the Planning Area (i.e. Folsom Boulevard).

The Draft EIR analysis is based on these buildout projections. Subsequent requests for increases in development potential beyond what is set forth in the General Plan would require approval of an amendment to the General Plan, and is outside the scope of the analysis of this EIR.

In addition to consideration of buildout potential under the proposed General Plan, this Draft EIR evaluates the following development scenarios for the General Plan:

Year 2030 Conditions. This development scenario is based on expected development levels within the Rancho Cordova Planning Area, as proposed by the General Plan, and within the Sacramento region by year 2030. This scenario corresponds to near buildout within the current City limits. (Buildout of residential areas is expected to be complete by 2050.) This analysis incorporates the roadway system identified in the proposed General Plan as being implemented by year 2030 (see **Figure 3.0-19**).

Buildout of the Entire Planning Area With General Plan Roadway Improvements for Year 2030. This development scenario assumes full buildout of the Rancho Cordova Planning Area, as proposed by the General Plan, and assuming year 2030 levels of development within the remainder of the Sacramento region. This analysis incorporates the roadway system identified in the proposed General Plan as being implemented by year 2030 (see **Figure 3.0-19**).

Buildout of the Entire Planning Area With Complete General Plan Roadway Improvements. This development scenario assumes full buildout of the Rancho Cordova Planning Area, as proposed by the General Plan, and assuming year 2030 levels of development within the remainder of the Sacramento region. This analysis incorporates the ultimate roadway system (roadway improvements identified beyond year 2030) identified in the proposed General Plan (see **Figure 3.0-19**).

STRUCTURE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

Sections 4.1 through 4.13 of this Draft EIR contain a detailed description of current setting conditions (including applicable regulatory setting), an evaluation of the direct and indirect environmental effects resulting from the implementation of the proposed General Plan, identification of proposed General Plan policies and actions items that mitigate the environmental effect, additional feasible mitigation measures, and identification of whether significant environmental effects of the General Plan would remain after application of proposed policies and action items, and feasible mitigation measures. The individual technical sections of the Draft EIR follow the following format.

Existing Setting

This sub-section includes a description of the physical setting conditions associated with the technical area of discussion, consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125. As previously identified above, the existing setting is based on conditions as they existed when the NOP for the project was released on February 25, 2005.

Regulatory Framework

This sub-section consists of the identification of applicable federal, state, regional and local plans, policies, laws and regulations that apply to the technical area of discussion.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The Impacts and Mitigation Measures sub-section identifies direct and indirect environmental effects associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan and identifies those proposed General Plan policies and action items that mitigate the environmental effect. Standards of significance are identified and utilized to determine whether identified environmental effects are considered "significant" and require the application of mitigation measures. Each environmental impact analysis is identified numerically (e.g., Impact 4.1.1 – Division of Established Communities) and is supported by substantial evidence included in the discussion.

Mitigation measures for the proposed General Plan were developed through a thorough review of the environmental effects of the General Plan by consultants with technical expertise as well as by environmental professionals. After identification of proposed General Plan policies and action items that mitigate the environmental impact being discussed, any additional feasible mitigation measures that could minimize significant adverse impacts are discussed, after which, the impact discussion notes whether the impact has been mitigated to a less than significant level or remains significant and unavoidable.

Cumulative Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures

This sub-section is an analysis of the proposed General Plan's contribution to cumulative impacts to the environment. The analysis focuses on whether the General Plan's contribution is "cumulatively considerable" (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130; see also the following subsection: Approach to the Cumulative Impact Analysis and Section 5.0 Cumulative Impact Summary). A cumulative impact occurs from the change in the environment that results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time CEQA Guidelines Section 15355(b). Accordingly, the cumulative setting includes related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects in the region.

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**TABLE 4.0-1
PROPOSED AND APPROVED LARGE-SCALE RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL PROJECTS**

Project Name	Residential Acres	Commercial Acres	Total Acres*	Residential Units	County/City General Plan Land Use Designation	County/City Zoning Designation	Current Status
Approved Projects							
Sunridge Park (Phase I and Phase II) (Part of Specific Plan)	203.4	32.3	244.2	953	Low Density Residential	RD-4, RD-5, RD-7, CMU, O	CEQA complete/ Under Construction
Anatolia I (Part of Specific Plan)	163.5	14.5	229.8	1,038	Residential, commercial, park, elementary school	RD-5, RD-7, RD-10	CEQA complete/ 392 units under construction as of 9/30/05
Anatolia II (Part of Specific Plan)	150.7	11.1	298	955	Residential, commercial, recreation center, park, school	RD-4, RD-5, RD-7, RD-10	CEQA complete/ 339 units under construction as of 9/30/05
Anatolia III (Part of Specific Plan)	208	N/A	208	879	Low Density Residential, Open Space	RD-4, RD-5, O	CEQA complete/site preparation and grading activities currently underway
Anatolia IV (Part of Specific Plan)	25	N/A	25	203	Residential	RD-5, RD-10	Public review complete MND Has not gone to City Council On hold for SB610 and water issues

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Project Name	Residential Acres	Commercial Acres	Total Acres*	Residential Units	County/City General Plan Land Use Designation	County/City Zoning Designation	Current Status
Mather East (Part of Specific Plan)	11.9	29.1	44.56	129	Commercial, Multi-family, open space	RD-10, LC	CEQA complete/ Not under Construction
Sunrise Douglas Shopping Center	N/A	14	14	N/A	Commercial	LC	CEQA complete/ Not under Construction
Villages of Zinfandel – Stone Creek Condos	17.08	N/A	17.08	214	Multi-Family Residential	Medium Density	CEQA complete/ Not under Construction
Villages of Zinfandel GPA	527	18	823	1,833	Residential, Commercial, Public, Recreation	SPA	CEQA complete/ Under construction (822 units remaining to be built as of 9/30/05)
North Douglas (Part of Specific Plan)	120.9	N/A	130.3	680	Low Density Residential, Park	RD-5, RD-7, RD-10, Park	CEQA complete/ Not under Construction
Capital Village	71.7	32	117	827	Mixed Use	SPA	CEQA complete/ Under Construction
Proposed Projects							
Rio del Oro	1,931	137	3,828.5	11,601	Mixed-use development, which will include a General Plan Amendment and Amendment of the Aerojet SPA Ordinance.	SPA (AG-80), SPA (M-2), SPA (IR) Industrial Reserve, M-2	CEQA/NEPA being completed

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Project Name	Residential Acres	Commercial Acres	Total Acres*	Residential Units	County/City General Plan Land Use Designation	County/City Zoning Designation	Current Status
Suncreek	2,901	306	3,410	5,459	Low density Residential, Medium density Residential, Commercial, Recreation, Open Space, Schools	SPA	CEQA/NEPA being completed
The Preserve at Sunridge	303.5	N/A	530	2,624	Residential, village center, parks, wetland preserve	RD-5, RD-7, RD-10, 5D-15, RD-30	CEQA complete/ Awaiting discretionary action
Sunridge East (approved portion of a specific plan)	363.7	24	640	3,042	Residential, commercial, office, and natural preserve	RD-5, RD-7, RD-10, RD-15 LC	CEQA complete/ Approved
Montelena (approved part of a specific plan)	158.3	N/A	251.9	879	Residential, wetland preserve, parks, fire station.	RD-4, RD-5, RD-7, RD-10, RD-20, O	CEQA complete/ Awaiting discretionary action
Westborough	1,000	274	1,518	6,000	Residential, business, community and recreational uses	RD-5, RD-10, RD-30, LC, CMU, VCMU, OMU	In preliminary planning stages
Glenborough	801	178	1,366	4,810	Residential, commercial and recreational uses	RD-5, RD-10, RD-30, LC, CMU, O	County Project

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Project Name	Residential Acres	Commercial Acres	Total Acres*	Residential Units	County/City General Plan Land Use Designation	County/City Zoning Designation	Current Status
Bradshaw Landing	N/A	N/A	40.5	N/A	360,000-square-foot theater and retail commercial use	LC	Revised and now called "The Landing" Notice of Intent to prepare an EIR released by Sacramento County
Legion of Christ Catholic College	N/A	N/A	300	N/A	Full-service residential campus by 2008 for 7,000 students and nearly 600 faculty members	N/A	County Project
Rancho Cordova Gateway	33,600 sq. ft.	63,230 sq. ft.	3.1	40	Retail, restaurant, high density residential	CMU	MND is being prepared
Major Development Projects in the Region							
South Mather Master Plan (Sacramento County)	N/A	Undefined development opportunities for economic development, airport commercial development and airport operations	1,070	N/A	Undefined development opportunities for economic development, airport commercial development, airport operations and wetland preserve	Multiple	Proposed
Laguna Ridge Specific Plan (City of Elk Grove)	1,203	196	1,900	7,762	Residential, commercial, office, public, open space	multiple	Approved and under construction.

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Project Name	Residential Acres	Commercial Acres	Total Acres*	Residential Units	County/City General Plan Land Use Designation	County/City Zoning Designation	Current Status
Elk Grove Promenade (formerly Lent Ranch Marketplace) (City of Elk Grove)	N/A	1.3 million square feet of retail uses		N/A	Commercial	Special Planning Area	Proposed
Palladio (City of Folsom)	N/A	50 400,000 square feet of retail uses	50	N/A	Commercial		Approved
Metre Planned Unit Development (City of Sacramento – North Natomas Community)	366	31	594	2,977	Residential, commercial, public, parks and open space	multiple	Proposed
Placer Vineyards Specific Plan (Placer County)	2,391	281	5,148	14,132	Residential, commercial, office, industrial, parks and open space	multiple	Proposed
Promontory Specific Plan (El Dorado County)	850	7	993	1,097	Residential, commercial, parks and open space	multiple	Approved and under construction.
Carson Creek Specific Plan (El Dorado County)	369	5	711	1,470	Residential, commercial, industrial, parks and open space	multiple	Approved
Valley View Specific Plan (El Dorado County)	1,271	40	2,038	2,837	Residential, commercial, parks and open space	Multiple	Approved and under construction.

Source: City of Rancho Cordova

Note: *Total acres also include acreage for residential and commercial and other land uses such as parks, schools, recreation centers, etc.

APPROACH TO THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

Definition of Cumulative Setting

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 requires that EIRs include an analysis of the cumulative impacts of a project when the project's effect is considered cumulatively considerable. In general, the cumulative setting conditions considered in this Draft EIR are based on:

- **SACOG Sacramento Region Blueprint and Preferred Blueprint Scenario.** The Sacramento Region Blueprint depicts a way (in terms of land uses and transportation improvements) for the region to grow through the year 2050, during which time the region is expected to witness growth in its current population of 2 million, to include more than 3.8 million people; in job increases from 921,000 to 1.9 million; and housing increases from 713,000 to 1.5 million units. The SACOG Board of Directors adopted the *Preferred Blueprint Scenario* in December 2004, a vision for growth that promotes compact, mixed-use development and more transit choices as an alternative to sprawling low-density development, which would consume more land for an equivalent number of housing units and result in a number of corresponding adverse environmental impacts. The Preferred Blueprint Scenario predicts long-term environmental benefits from undertaking a realistic long-term planning process, and these benefits are intended to minimize the extent of the inevitable physical expansion of the overall regional urban areas. The results would be greater protection of natural resources because less land would be required for urban uses and less agricultural land converted. In addition, the Preferred Blueprint Scenario predicts less time devoted to travel, fewer car trips, and fewer miles traveled to work and local businesses. The reduction in traffic would improve air quality in the region by reducing carbon monoxide and particulate matter produced by car exhaust. While only advisory, the Blueprint is the most authoritative policy guidance in the Sacramento region for long-term regional land use and transportation planning.
- **Local Adopted General Plans.** The existing land use plans in the Sacramento region consisting of Sacramento County, El Dorado County, Placer County and the cities of Sacramento, Folsom, Rancho Cordova, Galt, Citrus Heights, Roseville and Rocklin.
- **City of Folsom Sphere of Influence.** The City of Folsom is proposing a mix of land uses in the 3,584-acre SOI annexation area, including: 1,800 acres of residential (mix of small lot, large lot, executive, walkable community, and high density); 100 acres of commercial; 70 acres of business/professional; 125 acres of retail/office; 10 acres of public/quasi public; 297 acres of schools and city parks; 1,075 acres of open space; and 107 acres of roads.
- **Large-Scale Development Projects.** Consideration of large-scale proposed and approved development projects listed in **Table 4.0-1**. This list of projects is intended to describe large-scale past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future development activities in the Sacramento region that, when considered with the proposed General Plan, have the potential to have cumulatively considerable impacts. It is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of projects in the Sacramento region.
- **Effect of Regional Conditions.** This consists of consideration of background traffic volumes and patterns on state highways (e.g., US 50 and SR 16), background air quality conditions and other associated environmental conditions that occur within the Sacramento region, both within and outside of the Planning Area.

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- **Consideration of Existing Development Patterns.** This consists of consideration of the current environmental conditions of existing development and past land use activities in the region. This includes major land use activities in area such as operation of Mather Air Force Base and Aerojet, agricultural activities and conversion of open space and agricultural lands from existing development patterns and mining activities in the region.

Each technical section of the Draft EIR includes a description of the geographic extent of the cumulative setting based on the characteristics of the environmental issue under consideration as set forth in Section 15130(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines.

Consideration of Cumulative Impacts

Each technical section in the Draft EIR considers whether the project's effect on anticipated cumulative setting conditions is cumulatively considerable (i.e., a significant effect). "Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15065(a)(3)). The determination of whether the project's impact on cumulative conditions is considerable is based on a number of factors including: consideration of applicable public agency standards, consultation with public agencies and expert opinion. The environmental effects of potential development of the individual Planning Areas within the General Plan Planning Area are incorporated in the cumulative impact analysis. Section 5.0 (Cumulative Impacts Summary) provides a summary of the cumulative impacts associated with the General Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORTS UTILIZED IN THIS EIR

This Draft EIR utilizes technical information and analyses from previously prepared EIRs that are relevant to the consideration of environmental effects of the proposed General Plan, which is supported by the State CEQA Guidelines (see Sections 15148 [Citation] and 15150 [Incorporation by Reference]). In addition to materials cited, the following EIRs have been utilized in this Draft EIR:

- The Preserve at Sunridge Draft EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 2004092051)
- Sunrise Douglas Community Plan/Sun Ridge Specific Plan EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 97022055)
- Sacramento County Water Agency Zone 40 Water Supply Master Plan EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 2002122068)
- Water Forum Agreement EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 95082041)
- Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District Regional Interceptor Master Plan EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 200112085)
- Sacramento County Sanitation District 1 Sewerage Facilities Master Plan EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 200112085)
- Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant 2020 Master Plan EIR

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By utilizing these provisions of the State CEQA Guidelines, the City, in preparing this Draft EIR, has been able to make maximum feasible and appropriate use of the technical information in these EIRs. These EIRs and other referenced materials are available for review upon request at the City of Rancho Cordova City Hall located at 2729 Prospect Park Drive, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670.

TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR uses the following terminology:

Rancho Cordova General Plan Planning Area: This land area consists of land areas inside and outside the current incorporation boundaries of the City of Rancho Cordova for which the City anticipates it will annex during the planning horizon of the proposed General Plan, as a logical extension of city boundaries and services (see **Figure 3.0-3**). This area is also referred to as the "Planning Area" and the "Rancho Cordova Planning Area" in the Draft EIR.

Cumulatively Considerable: A cumulative significant impact would result when the project would contribute considerably to a significant physical impact on the environment expected under cumulative conditions.

Less Than Significant Impact: A less than significant impact would cause no substantial change in the physical condition of the environment. (No mitigation would be 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 could 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 made. Mitigation measures and/or project alternatives are identified to avoid or reduce to a less than significant level project effects to the environment.

Potentially Significant: a potentially significant impact is one that may or may not occur and where a definite determination cannot be made. Feasible mitigation measures and/or project alternatives are identified to avoid or reduce the project's effects on the environment to a less than significant level.

Significant and Unavoidable Impact: A significant and unavoidable impact would result in a substantial change in the environment that cannot feasibly 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 (Rancho Cordova) 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 are derived from the following: the State CEQA Guidelines; factual or scientific information; regulatory performance standards of local, state, and federal agencies; and, goals, objectives, and policies of the proposed General Plan. Specified significance criteria are identified at the beginning of the impact analyses in each technical section of the EIR.

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Subsequent Projects/Activities: Anticipated development projects (e.g., residential, commercial, park, recreational) that would occur in the future and would implement the General Plan. This would include public infrastructure and utility extension projects including, but not limited to, roadway widenings and extensions, intersection improvements, and water, stormwater, and wastewater distribution improvements.