

This section discusses additional topics statutorily required by CEQA, including significant irreversible environmental changes/irretrievable commitment of resources, significant and unavoidable environmental impacts, and growth-inducing impacts.

### 7.1 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

#### INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluate the growth-inducing impacts of a proposed action. A growth-inducing impact is defined by the CEQA Guidelines as:

*"...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. Included in this are projects which would remove obstacles to population growth...It must not be assumed that growth in an area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.*

A project can have direct and/or indirect growth inducement potential. Direct growth inducement would result if a project, for example, involved construction of new housing. A project would have indirect growth inducement potential if it established substantial new permanent employment opportunities (e.g., commercial, industrial or governmental enterprises) or if it would involve a construction effort with substantial short-term employment opportunities that would indirectly stimulate the need for additional housing and services to support the new employment demand. Similarly, a project would indirectly induce growth if it would remove an obstacle to additional growth and development, such as removing a constraint on a required public service. A project providing an increased water supply in an area where water service historically limited growth could be considered growth inducing.

The state CEQA Guidelines further explain that the environmental effects of induced growth are considered indirect impacts of the proposed action. These indirect impacts or secondary effects of growth may result in significant, adverse environmental impacts. Potential secondary effects of growth include increased demand on community and public services and infrastructure, increased traffic and noise, and adverse environmental impacts such as degradation of air and water quality, degradation or loss of plant and animal habitat, and conversion of agricultural and open space land to developed uses.

Growth inducement may constitute an adverse impact if the growth is not consistent with or accommodated by the land use plans and growth management plans and policies for the area affected. Local land use plans provide for land use development patterns and growth policies that allow for the orderly expansion of urban development supported by adequate urban public services, such as water supply, roadway infrastructure, sewer service, and solid waste service.

#### COMPONENTS OF GROWTH

The timing, magnitude, and location of land development and population growth in a community or region are based on various interrelated land use and economic variables. Key variables include regional economic trends, market demand for residential and non-residential uses, land availability and cost, the availability and quality of transportation facilities and public services, proximity to employment centers, the supply and cost of housing, and regulatory policies or conditions. Since the general plan of a community defines the location, type and intensity of growth, it is the primary means of regulating development and growth in California.

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### GROWTH INDUCEMENT POTENTIAL OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

Based on Government Code Section 65300, the General Plan is intended to serve as the overall plan for the physical development of the City of Elk Grove. While the General Plan does not specifically propose any development projects, it does regulate future population and economic growth of the City that would result in indirect growth-inducing effects.

Implementation of the proposed Sheldon/99 GPA and Rezone project would change the land use designation of parcels east of the Sheldon Road/SR 99 interchange from Low Density Residential and Medium Density Residential to Commercial. In addition, parcels to the north and east of the future East Stockton Boulevard alignment would be changed from Low and Medium Density Residential to the High Density Residential land use designation. Land use designations on the parcels to the south of Sheldon Road and to the east of the future East Stockton Boulevard would also be changed to Commercial. The proposed project site is located in an urbanized area and is primarily developed with rural residential uses. The specific environmental effects resulting from the proposed land use patterns and associated extension of public services are discussed in the environmental issue areas (Section 4.1 through Section 4.11). The proposed Sheldon/99 GPA and Rezone project would increase the intensity of land uses allowed over the levels anticipated in the General Plan.

It should be noted that the project site is located within the incorporated City limits. No lands are proposed for annexation as part of the Sheldon/99 GPA and Rezone project. In addition, no roadway improvements which would increase capacity on local roads are included as part of the proposed project.

### GROWTH EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

#### **Population and Employment Growth**

As discussed under Impact 4.2.1 in Section 4.2, Population, Employment, and Housing, implementation of the proposed project would accommodate population growth by designating 11.85 acres for high density residential uses. Subsequent development consistent with those land uses on the site could result in approximately 237 residential units (20 units per acre multiplied by 11.85 acres of RD-20 zoning), which would result in a population increase of 735 persons (3.10 persons per household multiplied by 237 housing units).

However, the proposed project would change the land use designations of approximately 20.81 acres of land to the commercial land use designation and would therefore accommodate the generation of approximately 529 new jobs. The project could therefore induce growth through the creation of permanent employment opportunities that would indirectly stimulate the need for additional housing and services to support the new employment demand.

Historically, Elk Grove has had an imbalance of jobs per housing units, with an excess of housing units in the City compared with employment opportunities. The proposed project creates 529 new jobs and only 237 new residential units. However, other existing and planned housing in the City would be adequate to accommodate potential employees, as there are generally more housing units than jobs available in the City. In addition, the increase in employees will assist the City in improving its balance between jobs and housing, which can reduce environmental impacts by limiting commute vehicle-miles traveled during peak periods in areas where congestion is growing.

### **Growth Effects Associated with Infrastructure Improvements**

The proposed Sheldon/99 GPA and Rezone project could potentially indirectly induce growth if it would remove an obstacle to additional growth and development, such as removing a constraint on a required public service. The City's infrastructure and public services are largely provided by other public and private service providers (e.g., Sacramento County Water Agency and Elk Grove Water Service for water supply, Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District and County Sanitation District 1 for wastewater service, Sacramento Municipal Utility District for electrical service) that utilize master plans for guiding planned facility and service expansions that are subject to environmental review under CEQA.

The project site is located in an area that is, for the most part, urbanized. The surrounding residential neighborhoods and commercial uses to the west of SR 99 are serviced by existing utility infrastructure. The project site itself is a mixture of vacant land and rural residential development. Infrastructure facilities such as water and sewer lines would need to be extended throughout the site to serve future development. As discussed under Section 4.10 Public Services and Utilities, the size and location of utility infrastructure would be contingent on the type and design of development proposed. Ultimately, the project site would connect to transmission water mains and sewer interceptors that are existing or planned in the area. The major Zone 40 water supply pipelines follow the alignment of existing and proposed roads. There is a 16" pipeline along Sheldon Road, a 30" pipeline that borders the western boundary of the project site south of Sheldon Road, and 12" pipeline along East Stockton Boulevard on the western boundary of the project site north of Sheldon Road (SCWA, 2006). In terms of sewer infrastructure, the project site is part of the Hwy 99/Sheldon Trunk Shed as shown in the 2006 CSD-1 Draft Master Plan Update. The sewer expansion lines that would serve future development on the project site are currently complete (Deeble, 2008). Therefore, development of the project site would not result in a significant extension of infrastructure facilities.

The project does not include any roadway improvements that would add capacity and accommodate increased traffic volumes. Therefore, the project would not result in any growth effects associated with increasing roadway capacity.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF GROWTH**

As described above, the proposed Sheldon/99 GPA and Rezone project would induce further population growth in the City. Future roadway and infrastructure improvements, including the realigned Sheldon/99 interchange and East Stockton Boulevard, would support such growth within the City. As a result of the project's potential to increase employment opportunities, the proposed Sheldon/99 GPA and Rezone is considered to be growth-inducing. The environmental effects of this growth would be similar to those envisioned in association with implementation of the existing land uses identified in the Elk Grove General Plan and would not result in substantial changes to demands for public services and utilities. The effects of this growth are addressed in Sections 4.1 to 4.11 of this DEIR.

### **7.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

CEQA Sections 21100(b)(2) and 21100.1(a) require that EIRs prepared for the adoption of a plan, policy, or ordinance of a public agency must include a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes of project implementation. In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c) describes irreversible environmental changes as:

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Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

The Elk Grove General Plan EIR (SCH Number 2002062082) evaluated significant irreversible environmental effects associated with implementation of the adopted General Plan. That EIR identified that the conversion of undeveloped open space land areas to residential, commercial, industrial, office, public and recreational uses would occur with implementation of the General Plan.

Development of the City of Elk Grove Land Use Policy Plan Map constitutes a long-term commitment to residential, commercial, and office land uses. It is unlikely that circumstances would arise that would justify the return of the land to its original condition.

Development of the City would irretrievably commit building materials and energy to the construction and maintenance of buildings and infrastructure proposed. Renewable, nonrenewable, and limited resources that would likely be consumed as part of the development of the proposed project would include, but are not limited to: oil, gasoline, lumber, sand and gravel, asphalt, water, steel, and similar materials. In addition, development of the Sheldon/99 GPA and Rezone project would result in the increased demand on public services and utilities (see Section 4.7 Hydrology and Water Quality and 4.11 Public Services and Utilities of this DEIR).

All of the parcels included in the proposed Sheldon/99 GPA and Rezone project are designated for urban development on the General Plan Land Use Policy Map. However, land uses allowed by the Sheldon/99 GPA and Rezone project would be more intensive than those currently allowed on the site by the General Plan. Specifically, commercial uses would consume more energy and natural resources than low and medium density residential uses. Therefore, the Sheldon/99 GPA and Rezone project is anticipated to result in significant irreversible impacts slightly greater than those discussed in the Elk Grove General Plan EIR. However, the increase would not be significant as development of the site under either land use scenario would result in the project site being permanently converted to urban uses.

### 7.3 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(b) requires an EIR to discuss unavoidable significant environmental effects, including those that can be mitigated but not reduced to a level of insignificance. In addition, Section 15093(a) of the CEQA Guidelines allows the decision-making agency to determine if the benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental impacts of implementing the project. The City can approve a project with unavoidable adverse impacts if it prepares a "Statement of Overriding Considerations" setting forth the specific reasons for making such a judgment.

On November 19, 2003, the City Council approved Resolution 2003-216 certifying the Elk Grove General Plan Final EIR and adopting the associated Findings of Fact regarding environmental effects. A Statement of Overriding Considerations was adopted for the following impacts that were identified as significant and unavoidable:

- Loss of important farmland
- Agriculture/urban interface conflicts
- Cumulative conversion of important farmland and agriculture/urban interface conflicts
- Cumulative conflicts with land use plans or study areas outside the City limits
- Unacceptable levels of service on area roadways during the A.M. and P.M. peak hours
- Unacceptable level of service on State Route 99 northbound and southbound between Eschinger Road and Grant Line Road during the A.M. and P.M. peak hours
- Unacceptable levels of service on area roadways during the A.M. And P.M. peak hours under cumulative conditions
- Temporary noise increases that would exceed the City's noise standards
- Increased traffic noise levels in excess of the City's noise standards
- Cumulative impacts to regional noise attenuation levels
- Increased air quality emissions related to construction activities
- Increased air pollution emissions from operational activities of land uses within the City
- Contribution to cumulative regional air quality impacts
- Increased demand for water supply to the City
- Cumulative increased demand for water supply services
- Direct and indirect impacts on special-status wildlife species and their associated habitats
- Cumulative impacts related to the loss of special-status plant and wildlife species and their associated habitat
- Cumulative wastewater impacts related to serving the Urban Study Areas
- Alteration of scenic resources
- Cumulative contribution to the conversion of the region's rural landscape to residential, commercial, and other land uses resulting in alteration of visual conditions

The following significant and unavoidable impacts associated with the proposed Sheldon/99 GPA and Rezone project are specifically identified in Sections 4.1 through Section 4.11 of this EIR. The reader is referred to the various environmental issue areas of these sections for further details and analysis of the significant and unavoidable impacts identified below.

### TRAFFIC AND CIRCULATION

- Impact 4.5.1** Implementation of the proposed project would result in a decline in service at four intersections along Sheldon Road. This is considered a **significant impact**.
- Impact 4.5.3** Implementation of the proposed Sheldon Road/SR 99 Project, in combination with other planned, approved and reasonably foreseeable projects, would result in a decline in LOS at nine intersections under cumulative conditions. Therefore the project would have a cumulatively considerable contribution to intersection operations. This is considered a **cumulatively considerable** impact.
- Impact 4.5.4** Implementation of the proposed project, in combination with other planned, approved and reasonably foreseeable projects, would result in cumulatively significant impacts to levels of service along two roadway segments. This impact is considered **cumulatively considerable**.

### AIR QUALITY

#### Long-term Increases of Criteria Air Pollutants

- Impact 4.7.3** Implementation of conceptual development associated with the proposed General Plan Amendment and Rezone would result in long-term increases in criteria air pollutants. This impact is considered **potentially significant**.

#### Regional Air Plan Impacts

- Impact 4.7.4** Implementation of the proposed project in combination with growth throughout the air basin would exacerbate existing regional problems with ozone and particulate matter. This is considered a **cumulatively considerable** impact.

#### Potential Increase in Long-Term Atmospheric Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- Impact 4.7.5** The project, in addition to existing, approved, proposed and reasonably foreseeable development in the Sacramento Valley Air Basin, may contribute to an increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the Earth's atmosphere. Higher concentrations of GHGs have been linked to the phenomenon of climate change. This would be a **cumulatively considerable** impact on the state's GHG reduction efforts.

### VISUAL RESOURCES/AESTHETICS

#### Degrade Existing Visual Character

- Impact 4.11.1** Future development resulting from implementation of the proposed project would convert the existing visual characteristic of the project site from rural residential land to developed urban uses and would substantially alter the current views of the site to travelers on the surrounding arterial roadways. This is a **significant** impact.

### REFERENCES

Deeble, Sarena. January 8, 2008. Personal Communication (letter). Sarena Deeble, Policy and Planning, Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District. Jessica Shalamunec, Special Projects Manager, City of Elk Grove Development Services Department, Planning. Note: Reference in text as (Deeble, 2008).

Sacramento County Water Agency. April, 2006. *Sacramento County Water Agency Zone 40 Water System Infrastructure Plan*. Sacramento, California. Note: Reference in text as (SCWA, 2006).