
7.0 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

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

7.1 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

INTRODUCTION

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 other 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

7.0 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

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.

GROWTH EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

As required by 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 the location and type of future development and thus controls future population and economic growth of the City that would result in indirect growth-inducing effects.

The Laguna Ridge Specific Plan (LRSP) is a policy and regulatory document. As a policy document, the LRSP amplifies the broader goals and policies contained in the General Plan through the establishment of policies for the Plan Area. As a regulatory document, the LRSP identifies the land use and zoning designations for all land in the Plan Area and lists development standards applicable solely to the Plan Area, while incorporating certain existing zoning standards of the Zoning Code by reference.

Implementation of the proposed Laguna Ridge Town Center project includes a General Plan Amendment, Specific Plan Amendment, and Rezone to enlarge the Town Center commercial area in the Laguna Ridge Specific Plan area. The 95.3-acre site is currently vacant and is designated a combination of High Density Residential (15.1-30 dwelling units per acre) and Commercial by the General Plan. The site is designated High Density Residential/20 dwelling units per acre (RD-20), Medium Density Residential/15.1 dwelling units per acre (RD-15), Medium Density Residential/10 dwelling units per acre (RD-10), and Shopping Commercial (SC) by the LRSP.

The proposed Laguna Ridge Town Center project would reconfigure the land use designations on the project site. The portion of the site designated for commercial uses would increase from 56.5 acres to 79.7 acres, and areas designated for a range of residential development densities would decrease from 38.8 acres to 15.6 acres and be designated solely High Density Residential/20 dwelling units per acre (RD-20). See Section 3.0, Project Description, for a full description of the proposed project. No specific development component is proposed with the Laguna Ridge Town Center project; at this time, the project only consists of the reconfiguration of land uses. However, it is anticipated that subsequent to the approval of the change in land use designations, applications for residential and commercial development projects would be submitted to the City.

The proposed changes in land use designations would result in an increase of 23.2 acres of commercial lands which could establish new permanent employment opportunities not anticipated by the General Plan. Conversely, the proposed change in land use designations would also result in a loss of 23.2 acres of residential lands, and therefore residential development potential would be reduced by up to 341 residential units.

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 Laguna Ridge Town Center project. In addition, no roadway improvements would result from the project that would increase capacity of local roads and infrastructure beyond capacity needed to serve the proposed project and planned development associated with the LRSP.

Population Growth

Implementation of the proposed Laguna Ridge Town Center project would not create any additional residential units. As previously noted, the proposed project would result in a loss of 23.2 acres of residential lands and up to 341 potential residential units. Implementation of the proposed Laguna Ridge Town Center project would create jobs in association with the increase of 23.2 acres of commercial lands on the site. While the project would provide jobs associated with these uses, it would not be a substantial generator of new jobs that would result in an influx of new residents to fill these jobs. Historically, Elk Grove has had a jobs-housing imbalance, with more households in the City than jobs available for the households. The increase in employment opportunities associated with the proposed project would serve to improve the jobs-housing balance, increasing job opportunities for local residents. As a result, the project would not create in an increase in population or demand for housing.

Growth Effects Associated with Infrastructure Improvements

The proposed Laguna Ridge Town Center 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 for water supply, Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District and Sacramento Area Sewer District for wastewater service, Sacramento Municipal Utility District for electrical service, PG&E for natural gas service) that utilize master plans for guiding planned facility and service expansions that are subject to environmental review under CEQA.

The proposed land use changes to the site associated with the proposed Laguna Ridge Town Center project are not growth inducing. The project site is located in an area that is surrounded either by development or vacant land approved for development. The project site is currently designated with a land use that envisions extension of public utilities and services, such as sewer, to serve the site. Water, sewer, and storm drainage services are available in the vicinity of the project, serving the existing commercial and residential development along Bruceville Road and Elk Grove Boulevard. As a result, extending sewer, water, and storm drainage service to serve the project site would not result in providing infrastructure that would put pressure on surrounding areas to develop at greater densities. Moreover, the project site is within a Specific Plan area designated for urban levels of development that would require extension of infrastructure, including water and wastewater services, under the existing General Plan. As a result, changing the land use designations of these sites is not anticipated to increase the pressure to develop lands within the City.

The project does not include any roadway or infrastructure improvements that would add capacity and accommodate increased growth that has not already been planned and anticipated under the General Plan and Laguna Ridge Specific Plan. Therefore, the project would not result in any growth effects associated with increasing roadway and infrastructure capacities.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF GROWTH

The proposed project would result in increased population and employment in Elk Grove. This would, in turn, result in increased traffic, air pollutant emissions, operational and traffic noise, increased demand for services, and loss of vacant/open lands. Environmental effects of developing the Laguna Ridge Specific Plan area, including the project site, include potential effects on special-status species and their habitat, potential destruction or damage to cultural

7.0 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

resources, increased erosion and runoff affecting soil stability and water quality, changes to drainage patterns and runoff, potential land use conflicts, increased light and glare, changes to visual character, and loss of agricultural resources. These issues are discussed in the Laguna Ridge Specific Plan EIR (SCH Number 2000082139). The proposed project would result in increased potential for land use conflicts, operational noise impacts, traffic noise, and traffic/circulation impacts beyond the impacts discussed in the Laguna Ridge Specific Plan EIR. Sections 4.1 through 5.0 of this EIR identify the potential increase in physical effects on the environment associated with implementation of the proposed project.

7.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Public Resources Code Section 21100(b)(2), a part of CEQA, requires that certain EIRs must include a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes of project implementation. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c) describes irreversible environmental changes as follows:

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 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 would constitute 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 project site would irretrievably commit building materials and energy to the construction and maintenance of buildings and infrastructure accommodated by the proposed project. 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. The project would require a long-term commitment for the provision of public services, including water treatment and supply, wastewater treatment and disposal, solid waste removal and disposal, and natural gas, electricity, and communication services. Development of the infrastructure necessary for these services would irretrievably commit building materials, energy, and physical sites for their provision.

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. A list of unavoidable adverse impacts identified in this EIR is provided below.

AIR QUALITY

Regional Air Plan Impacts

Impact 4.2.4 Implementation of the proposed project in combination with growth throughout the air basin would exacerbate existing regional problems with ozone and particulate matter. The project would have a **cumulatively considerable** contribution to this **significant and unavoidable** impact.

NOISE

Long-term Noise Levels – Proposed Medical Center

Impact 4.3.2 Proposed medical office land uses could result in substantial increases in ambient noise levels that could exceed the City's noise standards at nearby noise-sensitive land uses. In the event that the proposed medical center were to include a helipad, it is unlikely that resultant noise levels at all nearby noise-sensitive land uses would be reduced to within acceptable levels. As a result, this impact would be considered **significant and unavoidable**.

TRAFFIC AND CIRCULATION

Operations on Elk Grove Boulevard between Laguna Springs Drive and SR 99 and between Wymark Drive and Big Horn Boulevard

Impact 4.4.6 The addition of project traffic to cumulative volumes would increase the volume to capacity ratio on Elk Grove Boulevard between Laguna Springs Drive and SR 99 and between Wymark Drive and Big Horn Boulevard by at least 0.05. Since these roadway segments currently operate unacceptably (LOS F and LOS E respectively) under cumulative no project conditions, the project would have a **cumulatively considerable** contribution to this **significant and unavoidable** impact.

Cumulative Operations at Intersections in the Project Vicinity

Impact 4.4.9 The addition of project traffic to cumulative no project volumes would increase the average delay at multiple project vicinity intersections by more than five seconds. Since these intersections operates unacceptably (LOS F or LOS E) under cumulative no project conditions, the project would have a **cumulatively considerable** contribution to this **significant and unavoidable** impact.