

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

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 way 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 is not 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 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

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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

Based on Government Code Section 65300, the proposed 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 General Plan would refine existing land use designations in the City, establish new policies, actions and design guidelines to guide and manage future development and land uses in the City. This would also include policy direction on roadway facility improvements, public service improvements and the extension and expansion of utilities. The specific environmental effects resulting from the proposed land use patterns and associated extension of public services are discussed in the environmental issue areas in Section 4.0. The proposed General Plan would result in a residential buildout (assumed to be at year 2025) of approximately 63,430 residential units and a population of 194,453 persons.

Population Growth

As described in Section 4.3 (Population/Housing/Employment), the Sacramento Council of Governments (SACOG) future housing projections for Elk Grove for year 2025 is 61,759 units, while the City General Plan is expected to generate approximately 63,340 housing units. In addition, SACOG projects the City's job/housing ratio in year 2025 to be 0.65, while implementation of the proposed General Plan has the capacity to generate approximately 73,567 jobs with a resulting job/housing ratio of 1.16. Thus, the General Plan would accommodate growth projected by SACOG and is anticipated to provide improved jobs/housing balance conditions in the City than currently estimated by SACOG.

However, buildout of the City under the Sacramento County General Plan Land Use Map¹ would have accommodated 70,047 residential dwelling units and a population of approximately 215,046. This additional growth originally planned for under the Sacramento County General Plan may not be provided in the current City limits under the proposed General Plan and could be displaced to other areas in the region. In addition, future regional growth beyond 2025 anticipated by SACOG would also not be accommodated in the current City limits. This potential displaced growth would place pressure on areas adjoining the City to develop. The proposed General Plan recognizes that future urban development outside of the current City boundaries may be appropriate to accommodate future growth and identifies the Urban Study Areas as possible annexation areas for the City to accommodate such growth (see **Figure 3.0-7**). The environmental effects of potential development of the Urban Study Areas is addressed in this Draft EIR.

Growth Effects Associated with Infrastructure Improvements

The proposed General Plan could potentially indirectly induce growth if it would remove an obstacle to additional growth and development, such as removing a constraint on a required

¹ Buildout estimates for the City under the Sacramento County General Plan Land Use Map take into account the approved East Franklin Specific Plan, East Elk Grove Specific Plan, Lent Ranch Marketplace Special Planning Area and other approved General Plan amendments and rezones since incorporation, a similar level of urban development for the Southeast Policy Area as the proposed General Plan, and current and maximum residential densities.

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 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. However, the proposed General Plan does include proposed roadway improvements that have been designed to support the General Plan Land Use Policy Map and maintain the City's proposed level of service (LOS) standard of LOS "D" where feasible and appropriate. The proposed General Plan does not include any provisions requiring the oversizing of infrastructure facilities to serve growth not anticipated in the General Plan Land Use Policy Map.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF GROWTH

As described above, the proposed General Plan would induce further population and job growth in the City as well as potentially induce growth outside of the City (e.g., within the Urban Study Areas). Proposed roadway improvements would support such growth within the City. As a result, the proposed General Plan is considered to be growth-inducing. The environmental effects of this growth within the City and in the Urban Study Areas is addressed in Sections 4.1 through 4.13 of this Draft EIR.

7.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

CEQA Sections 21100(b)(2) and 21100.1(a) require that EIRs prepared for the adoption of 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:

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.

Implementation of the proposed City of Elk Grove General Plan would result in the conversion of undeveloped open space land areas to residential, commercial, industrial, office, public and recreational uses. Development of the Plan area would constitute a long-term commitment to residential 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 project would result in the increase demand on public services and utilities (see Section 4.8 Hydrology/Water Quality and 4.12 Public Facilities and Finance).

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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 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.

The following significant and unavoidable impacts are specifically identified in Section 4.0 of this EIR. The reader is referred to the various environmental issue areas of Section 4.0 for further details and analysis of the significant and unavoidable impacts identified below.

SECTION 4.1 AGRICULTURE

Loss of Agricultural Land

Impact 4.1.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in the loss of important farmlands (Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance) as designated under the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program as well as lands under active Williamson Act contracts. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Agricultural/Urban Interfaces

Impact 4.1.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan could result in the placement of urban uses adjacent to agricultural uses within and adjacent to the City. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Impacts to Agricultural Resources

Impact 4.1.3 Implementation of the proposed General Plan along with potential development in the Urban Study Areas would contribute significantly to the conversion of important farmland and agriculture/urban interface conflicts. This would be a **cumulative significant** impact.

SECTION 4.2 LAND USE

Consistency with Relevant Planning Documents in the Planning Area

Impact 4.2.3 Implementation of the proposed General Plan could impact land use plans or study areas outside of the city limits, but within the Planning Area. This is a **cumulative significant** impact.

SECTION 4.5 TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

Local Roadway System

Impact 4.5.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in increased traffic volumes, V/C ratios, and a decrease in LOS on area roadways during the A.M. and P.M. peak hours. This is considered a **significant** impact.

impact.

State Highways

Impact 4.5.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in increased traffic volumes, V/C ratios, and a decrease in LOS on state highways during the A.M. and P.M. peak hours. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Traffic Impacts on Local Roadways and State Highways

Impact 4.5.6 Implementation of the proposed General Plan as well as potential development of the Urban Study Areas would contribute to significant impacts on local roadways and state highways under cumulative conditions. This is considered a **cumulative significant** impact.

SECTION 4.6 NOISE

Construction Noise Impacts

Impact 4.6.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in subsequent development projects and cause an increase in construction noise levels that would exceed City of Elk Grove noise standards. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact.

Traffic Noise Impacts

Impact 4.6.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in increases in traffic noise levels that would be in excess of City of Elk Grove noise standards. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Regional Traffic Noise Impacts

Impact 4.6.8 Implementation of the proposed General Plan along with potential development of the Urban Study Areas would result in impacts to regional noise attenuation levels. This is considered a **cumulative significant** impact.

SECTION 4.7 AIR QUALITY

Construction Related Emissions

Impact 4.7.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in period exhaust emissions and fugitive dust from construction activities that would affect local air quality. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Operation Related Emissions

Impact 4.7.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would increase air pollutant emissions from operational activities of land uses within the City. This is considered a **significant** impact.

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Regional Air Plan Impacts

Impact 4.7.4 Implementation of the proposed General Plan along with potential development of the Urban Study Areas would exacerbate existing regional problems with ozone and particulate matter. This is considered a **cumulative significant** impact.

SECTION 4.8 HYDROLOGY/WATER QUALITY

Environmental Effects of Increased Water Demand

Impact 4.8.5 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would increase demand for water supply to the City requiring increased groundwater production and the use of surface water supplies. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Water Supply Impacts

Impact 4.8.8 Implementation of the proposed General Plan along with potential development of the Urban Study Areas, would contribute to an increased demand for water supply requiring increased groundwater production and the use of surface water supplies that could result in significant environmental impacts. This is considered a **cumulative significant** impact.

SECTION 4.10 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Special-Status Wildlife Species and Associated Habitat Impacts

Impact 4.10.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan could result in direct and indirect impacts on special-status wildlife species and their associated habitats. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Biological Resource Impacts

Impact 4.10.4 Implementation of the proposed General Plan along with potential development of the Urban Study Areas would contribute to cumulative impacts associated with significant effects to special-status plant and wildlife species and habitat loss. This would be a **cumulative significant** impact.

SECTION 4.12 PUBLIC SERVICES AND UTILITIES

Cumulative Wastewater Demands

Impact 4.12.4.4 Implementation of the proposed General Plan along with potential development of the Urban Study Areas and growth in the SRCSD service area would result in cumulative wastewater impacts. This is considered a **cumulative significant** impact.

SECTION 4.13 VISUAL RESOURCES

Alteration of Scenic Resources

Impact 4.13.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in the alteration of scenic resources. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Impacts to Visual Resources

Impact 4.13.4 Implementation of the proposed General Plan along with potential development of the Urban Study Areas would result in the further conversion of the region's rural landscape to residential, commercial, and other land uses. This would contribute to the alteration of the visual resources in the region. This is considered a **cumulative significant** impact.