

This Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines (Section 15132). The City of Elk Grove is the Lead Agency for the environmental review of the City of Elk Grove General Plan (project) and has the principal responsibility for approving the General Plan. This FEIR assesses the expected environmental impacts resulting from approval of the City of Elk Grove General Plan and associated impacts from subsequent development under the project, as well as responds to comments received on the Draft EIR.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE EIR

OVERVIEW OF CEQA REQUIREMENTS FOR PREPARATION OF AN EIR

The City of Elk Grove (City), acting as the Lead Agency, has prepared this FEIR to provide the public and responsible trustee agencies with information about the potential environmental effects of the proposed General Plan. As described in the California Environmental Quality Act (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 adverse environmental impacts. Public agencies are charged with the duty to consider and minimize environmental impacts of proposed development where feasible, and obligated to balance a variety of public objectives including economic, environmental, and social factors.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15121(a) states that an EIR is an informational document for decision-makers and the general public that analyzes the significant environmental effects of a project, identifies possible ways to minimize significant effects, and describes reasonable alternatives to the project that could reduce or avoid its adverse environmental impacts. Public agencies with discretionary authority are required to consider the information in the EIR, along with any other relevant information, in making decisions on the project.

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]). The City has determined that the proposed General Plan is a "project" within the definition of CEQA.

BACKGROUND OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS OF THE PROJECT

The following is an overview of the environmental review process for the General Plan that have led to the preparation of this FEIR:

Notice of Preparation and Initial Study

In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the City prepared a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR for the project on June 21, 2002. The City 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. Concerns raised in response to the NOP were considered during preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). The NOP and responses by interested parties are presented in **Appendix 1.0** of the DEIR. 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 1.0** of the DEIR.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Draft EIR

The DEIR, which consisted of two volumes, was released for public and agency review on August 11, 2003 and ended on September 25, 2003. The DEIR 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.

Final EIR

Following the close of the public review period, the City received 7 individual comment letters from agencies, interest groups and the public regarding the DEIR. This document responds to the written comments received as required by CEQA. This document also contains minor edits to the DEIR and the final mitigation monitoring and reporting program for the project. This document and the DEIR constitute the FEIR.

Certification of the Final EIR/Project Consideration

The City of Elk Grove will review and consider the FEIR. If the City finds that the FEIR is "adequate and complete", the City may certify the FEIR, at a public hearing. The rule of adequacy generally holds that the EIR can be certified if: 1) it shows a good faith effort at full disclosure of environmental information; and 2) provides sufficient analysis to allow decisions to be made regarding the project in contemplation of its environmental consequences.

Upon review and consideration of the FEIR, the City 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. Public Resources Code Section 21081.6 also requires lead agencies to adopt a reporting and mitigation monitoring and reporting 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 final mitigation monitoring and reporting program for the project is provided in this document.

1.2 TYPE OF DOCUMENT

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.

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.*

This EIR will be used to evaluate subsequent projects under the proposed City of Elk Grove General Plan. Additional environmental review under CEQA would be required and would be generally based on the subsequent project's consistency with the General Plan and the analysis in this EIR, as required under CEQA.

1.3 INTENDED USES OF THE EIR

This EIR has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The EIR is intended to evaluate the environmental impacts of the project to the greatest extent possible. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126, this EIR should be used as the primary environmental document to evaluate all subsequent planning and permitting actions associated with projects in the City. Subsequent actions that may be associated with the project are identified in Section 3.0 (Project Description) of the DEIR.

1.4 ORGANIZATION AND SCOPE OF THE FINAL EIR

This document is organized in the following manner:

SECTION 1.0—INTRODUCTION

Section 1.0 provides an overview of the EIR process to date and what the FEIR is required to contain.

SECTION 2.0—EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section provides a brief project description and presents a summary table of probable environmental effects edited as a result of comments received on the DEIR and minor staff edits.

SECTION 3.0—COMMENTS AND RESPONSES TO COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT EIR

Section 3.0 provides a list of commentors, copies of written comments (coded for reference) and the responses to those written comments as well as master responses to common comments made on the DEIR.

SECTION 4.0—MINOR EDITS TO THE DRAFT EIR

Section 4.0 consists of minor text changes made to the DEIR as a result of comments on the DEIR and minor staff edits.