
7.0 Long-Term Implications

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 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

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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 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 Amendment would refine existing land use designations in the City on eight different sites. Development of these sites would result in 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 Amendment would increase the residential buildout (assumed to be at year 2025) by 884 residential units and 2,714 persons, resulting in a total of 64,612 residential units and a population of 198,359 persons.

Population Growth

As described in Section 4.2 (Population/Housing/Employment), the Sacramento Council of Governments (SACOG) future housing projections for Elk Grove for year 2025 is 61,759 units. Implementation of the General Plan Amendment would allow approximately 884 additional residential units for 64,612 dwelling units from buildout under the General Plan, which would accommodate a population of approximately 198,359. In addition, SACOG projects the City's job/housing ratio in year 2025 to be 0.65, while implementation of the proposed General Plan Amendment has the capacity to generate approximately 60,792 jobs with a resulting job/housing ratio of 0.94. 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 adopted General Plan Land Use Map would have accommodated 63,728 residential dwelling units and a population of approximately 195,645. This General Plan Amendment would accommodate more growth than provided for in the adopted General Plan and it would also generate more jobs and housing units to serve the anticipated population. This increased growth would allow the city to accommodate a greater amount of the regional demand for housing and could slightly reduce pressure on surrounding areas (e.g., Urban Study Areas) to develop.

Growth Effects Associated with Infrastructure Improvements

The proposed General Plan Amendment 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 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 proposed land use changes to Sites 4, 5, 24, 40, 41, and A associated with the General Plan Amendment are not growth-inducing. These sites are located in areas that are all or mostly

developed. With the exception of Site A, none of these sites are currently designated with a land use that precludes extension of public utilities and services, such as sewer, to serve the site. While Site A is designated Open Space, this designation is a mapping error as it is zoned RD-20, expected to develop with multifamily uses, and is surrounded by development.

The proposed General Plan Amendment would place low density residential uses in an area currently planned for rural residential development (Sites 21 and 29) and the extension of sewer infrastructure onto those sites would be necessary to serve the anticipated residences. The County Sanitation District-1 Master Plan for this area did plan to extend infrastructure into this area. However, the General Plan does contain Policy PF-10 which strongly discourages extending sewer service into Rural Residential areas. Any future proposals to convert Rural Residential land uses to higher density uses would be evaluated for consistency with Policy PF-10.

The General Plan designates the areas to the east and west of Sites 21 and 29 as Rural Residential. Extension of public utilities onto these Sites 21 and 29 to serve low density residential development could pressure surrounding areas to develop with higher intensities. Development of these higher intensities may require extension of sewer services into Rural Residential areas in conflict with Policy PF-10 and would also result in the following environmental impacts associated with development:

- **Land Use:** Conversion of Rural Residential areas in the vicinity of Sites 21 and 29 would conflict with General Plan Policies LU-18 and PF-10 and result in increased development in an area designated for rural use.
- **Population/Housing:** Increased development in the area would provide additional housing opportunities within the City of Elk Grove and would help accommodate long-term regional demand projected by SACOG.
- **Hazards/Human Health, Hydrology/Water Quality, Geology and Soils, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources:** These issue areas were evaluated in the Elk Grove General Plan EIR. Comparable impacts in these environmental areas are anticipated with changed land uses on these sites, with application of General Plan policies and mitigation measures identified in the Elk Grove General Plan EIR to reduce the severity of impacts.
- **Transportation and Circulation:** Increased levels of development in this area would increase trip generation and potentially worsen levels of service on area roadways.
- **Noise:** Increased noise levels would result from the increased traffic that would be generated from higher density development in this area.
- **Air Quality:** Increased air emissions would result from the increased traffic that would be generated from higher density development in this area.
- **Public Services and Utilities:** Development of higher density uses in this area would result in increased demand for public services and utilities, including water, wastewater, solid waste, recreation, schools, and gas, electric and telephone services. Extension of sewer service into this area would be inconsistent with Policy PF-10.

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- **Visual Resources:** Visual impacts would result from changing the character of this area from rural to urbanized uses.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF GROWTH

As described above, the proposed General Plan Amendment would induce further population and job growth in the City. Future roadway and infrastructure improvements would support such growth within the City. As a result, the proposed General Plan Amendment is considered to be growth-inducing. The environmental effects of this growth within the City is addressed in Sections 4.1 through 4.7 of this DSEIR.

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. Irrecoverable 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 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 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 of the Elk Grove General Plan Draft EIR).

The General Plan Amendment would result in significant irreversible impacts comparable to those discussed in the Elk Grove General Plan EIR.

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.

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 serving the Urban Study Areas

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- 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 General Plan Amendment 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 LAND USE

Consistency with Relevant Land Use Planning Documents

Impact 4.1.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Amendment Sites A, 4, 5, 24, 40, and 41 would be consistent with relevant land use planning documents within the City of Elk Grove. However, implementation of Sites 21 and 29 would be inconsistent with relevant land use planning documents. This is considered a **significant** impact for Sites 21 and 29.

Increased Development

Impact 4.1.3 Development of the General Plan Alternative sites in addition to other reasonably foreseeable projects in the region would change the land use patterns and result in conversion to residential and commercial/office and would result in land use development in excess of that allowed under the General Plan. This impact would be **cumulative significant and unavoidable**.

SECTION 4.3 TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

Local Roadway System

Impact 4.3.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Amendment 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 and unavoidable** impact.

Cumulative Traffic Impacts on Local Roadways and State Highways

Impact 4.3.4 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Amendment as well as potential development within the City and adjacent areas would contribute to significant impacts on local roadways and state highways under cumulative conditions. This is considered a **cumulative significant** impact.

SECTION 4.5 AIR QUALITY

Operation Related Emissions

Impact 4.5.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Amendment would increase air pollutant emissions from operational activities of land uses within the City. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact.

Regional Air Plan Impacts

Impact 4.5.4 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Amendment along with potential development in the region would exacerbate existing regional problems with ozone and particulate matter. This is considered a **cumulative significant and unavoidable** impact.

SECTION 4.7 VISUAL RESOURCES/LIGHT AND GLARE

Alteration of Scenic Resources

Impact 4.7.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Amendment could result in the alteration of scenic resources and degradation of the visual character and quality in the City. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Impacts to Visual Character

Impact 4.7.3 Implementation of the proposed GPA along with potential development of the sites would result in the further conversion of the City's rural landscape to residential, commercial, and other land uses. This would contribute to the alteration of the visual character for certain areas in the City. This is considered a **cumulative significant** impact