

### **PURPOSE**

*The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the discussion of the ways in which a 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 that would remove obstacles to population growth. Such discussion should also include the characteristics of a project that may encourage and/or facilitate other activities that, either individually or cumulatively, could significantly affect the environment. CEQA emphasizes that growth in an area should not be considered beneficial, detrimental or of little significance. The purpose of this section is to evaluate the growth-inducing potential of this project.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In general terms, a project may foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, in a geographic area if it meets any one of the following four criteria.

- Removal of an impediment to growth (e.g., the establishment of an essential public service or the provision of new access to an area)
- Economic expansion or growth (e.g., construction of additional housing, changes in revenue base, employment expansion, etc.)
- Establishment of a precedent-setting action (e.g., an innovation, a change in zoning or general plan designation)
- Development or encroachment in an isolated or adjacent area of open space (being distinct from an “infill” type of project)

Should a project meet any one of these criteria, it can be considered growth inducing. An evaluation of this project with respect to these four growth-inducing criteria is provided below.

The CEQA Guidelines also require that consideration also be given to potential impacts on community service facilities resulting from increases in population.

It must be emphasized that the CEQA Guidelines require an EIR to “discuss the *ways*” [emphasis added] a project could be growth inducing and to “discuss the *characteristics* of some projects that *may* encourage...activities that could significantly affect the environment” [emphasis added]. However, the CEQA Guidelines do not require or even suggest that an EIR should predict (or speculate), specifically where such growth would occur, in what form it would occur, or when it would occur. The answers to such questions may require speculation, which CEQA discourages (see CEQA Guidelines §15145).

## **GROWTH INDUCEMENT POTENTIAL**

### **Removal of an Impediment to Growth**

Growth in an area may result from the removal of physical impediments or restrictions to growth. In this context, physical growth impediments may include nonexistent or inadequate access to an area or the lack of essential public services.

Regional access to the project site is provided by SR 99; local access is provided by Kammerer Road, Grant Line Road, and West Stockton Boulevard. The project would involve the construction of improvements to Kammerer Road and West Stockton Boulevard and the construction of internal roadways, but would not require the construction of new access roadways.

The project would be served in part by a reconstructed interchange at SR-99 and Grant Line Road. The interchange reconstruction has been identified in the Final Metropolitan Transportation Plan prepared by the Sacramento Council of Governments (SACOG). The MTP is a long-range transportation blueprint, covering the years 1999 through 2022 for a six-county planning area centering on Sacramento County. The MTP outlines the region’s transportation needs, sets goals and objectives, and proposes solutions to meet them. The interchange reconstruction has been identified by the MTP as a corridor-specific strategy for SR-99. As such, the interchange reconstruction is needed with or without the proposed project. Nevertheless, the Grant Line Interchange is considered to be growth inducing. Therefore, the project in combination with the interchange is also considered to be growth inducing.

The proposed project would obtain water supplies from the County Zone 41 system. There is currently no public water service within the project area (other than on-site wells); the project applicant would extend a 24-inch water main from a future off-site treatment plant to the project site. The main may be extended part of the way by other projects in the area, such as the approved East Elk Grove Specific Plan. The treatment plant will be constructed in 2000-2001 as part of the Zone 40 water system improvements, with or without the project. The proposed water line would be extended south along Waterman Road to

Grant Line Road, and then southwesterly along Grant Line Road across the reconstructed Grant Line Road/SR-99 interchange to the project site. Land near the proposed extension route includes areas designated Intensive Industrial in the General Plan and developed in industrial uses; nearby lands designated for General Agriculture; and land (along Grant Line Road near Waterman Road) designated Low-Density Residential. A review of aerial photographs and the General Plan Land Use Map indicates that the land near the extension route is partly developed, and has the potential to accommodate additional development. There are existing water transmission facilities east of SR-99 that serve the area west of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks; the extension of a larger water main would accommodate additional development.

Although the water supplied from the Powerline plant should be sufficient for the entire project, the Lent Ranch applicant may be required to provide a second source of water in the near term. The second source would most likely be through a connection to the facility to be constructed with the first phase of the East Franklin Specific Plan, east of Bruceville Road and south of Poppy Ridge Road. The exact alignment of such a connection is not known, but would generally follow existing or planned rights-of-way. The connection is a possible component of the proposed project. This connection could extend through or near lands that are currently in agricultural use, and are designated for Agriculture-Urban Reserve in the County General Plan. The availability of the water connection near these areas could lead to development; such development would require approval of a General Plan Amendment, rezoning and other entitlements.

The project site is within the jurisdictional boundaries of the Sacramento County Sanitation District No. 1 and Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District (SRCSD). The project area is ultimately proposed to be served by an SRCSD interceptor line to be extended from the County wastewater treatment plant, northwest of the Lent Ranch site. All areas south of Elk Grove Boulevard will be connected to the future interceptor line. In the interim, the project applicant would connect to an existing 30-inch trunk sewer line located within East Stockton Boulevard, east of SR-99. The connection would be made by a lift station and force main, probably through an existing drainage culvert under SR-99. The main would be routed directly into the project site; there are no undeveloped lands between the site and the trunk line. The proposed sewer connection would allow for sewer service to the South Pointe site west of the project site; however, a project has already been proposed for this site, so the project would not be growth-inducing in that respect. According to the project engineer, the 12" force main and the 8" onsite line would not provide any additional capacity for sewer collection for properties south of Kammerer Road and outside of the Urban Service Area boundary, or for properties west of the South Pointe site.

## Economic Growth

The proposed project would potentially induce growth by introducing employment opportunities from construction and operation of the retail and commercial uses associated with the project proposal. The proposed mall and other commercial development would generate about 7,700 total new jobs. This total would represent about 21 percent of the total projected 36,217 jobs in the City of Elk Grove in 2022, and less than 1 percent of the projected 754,925 jobs in Sacramento County. Given this project's size in relation to the area's work force, the economic contribution of this project alone would be considerable. In addition to the long-term employment, the proposed development would also generate short-term construction jobs.

The new employees could induce growth in two ways: (1) through their spending on goods and services; and (2) through their need for housing. As the mall and other proposed development would include retail and service uses, these uses could meet some or most of the needs of the new employees for goods and services. However, employees that do not live near the mall could generate additional demand for goods and services near their homes.

Where the new employees live will depend on a number of factors, including their income, the availability and prices of housing near the mall relative to other areas, and their current place of residence. Therefore, it cannot be determined whether the new employees would live in existing or projected future housing in the area. Some employees of the project would already be employees in the area, and would just be changing their jobs to a different location; other employees might be attracted to move into the area by the availability of work.

The City of Elk Grove *General Plan* anticipates development of properties within the Urban Policy and Urban Service Boundary Areas; approved, planned and other proposed development in the area will result in the construction of about 21,300 single-family residential and about 1,800 multi-family residential units. The proposed project is intended to serve the retail needs of the approved or proposed large residential projects immediately north and west of the project site including the approved East Franklin Specific Plan and the proposed Laguna Ridge Specific Plan, as well as for existing and future uses within the City. These projects would also provide housing that could be used by employees of the project. Some employees would purchase new housing in the area; others would rent housing. However, it is possible that some of the employees would generate demand for housing elsewhere (to purchase or rent), or that the project could help to accelerate the construction of housing within areas already planned for development.

The project also includes the construction of about 280 multi-family residential units. These units could accommodate some of the rental housing demand of project employees, and in that sense, would help to reduce the project's growth-inducing potential. In addition, the proposed commercial uses could help to accommodate the demand for goods and services generated by the new residences, as well as improving the region's job/housing balance.

The project would also generate demand for the products and services that would supply the proposed development. This increase in demand could lead to growth in the areas in which the product manufacturers and service providers are located. However, it would be speculative at this point to determine the locations or extent of such growth.

### **Precedent-Setting Action**

Changes from a project that could be precedent-setting include (among others) a change in zoning, general plan designation, general plan text or approval of exceptions to regulations that could have implications for other properties or that could make it easier for other properties to develop.

The project would involve a General Plan Amendment to change the land use designation from Urban Development Area to Commercial and Offices and Medium-Density Residential. The Urban Development designation applies to land that is intended for future urban development.

The proposed project is also located in the Urban Policy and Urban Service Boundary Areas as defined by the General Plan. The designation of these areas signifies that it is appropriate for development to occur within these areas within the 20-year planning period. As indicated on page 2-10 of *General Plan*:

"The urban policy boundary is intended to enclose the existing urban area plus lands which could be developed by the 2010 plan horizon date. Virtually all of the holding capacity created by the Plan falls within this Boundary."

"The Urban Services Boundary delimits the outermost extent of future urban services."

The *General Plan* intended for development to take place on the edges of the Urban Policy Boundary as indicated on page 2-10:

"Under the proposed General Plan Update, new development would be strongly encouraged or required to take the form of dense urban development along transit

corridors. Infill development would take place as well, but infill development alone was assumed in the draft Plan to account for only a small portion of projected growth; 14 percent of projected residential growth. The bulk of growth would take place in the New Growth Areas on the edges of the Urban Policy Boundary.”

The proposed project is located on the boundary of the Urban Policy Area and is located along a heavily traveled transit corridor, SR-99. The project is consistent with discussion within the *General Plan* as it relates to the Urban Service Boundary and the Urban Policy Boundary. Therefore, an amendment to the General Plan land use designation to allow development on the project site would not be precedent-setting.

The General Plan notes that “The Urban Development Area (UDA) designation indicates where the County will conduct studies leading to the appropriate configuration of urban land uses for the area.” This language implies that the County would redesignate lands within the UDA for specific urban uses after conducting studies, a step that the County has not taken with respect to the project site. (As a point of comparison, the approved East Franklin Specific Plan includes land once designated UDA in the General Plan, but the Specific Plan was prepared with the participation of County staff.) Approval of land use designations proposed by a project applicant could lead to other proposals to develop land designated UDA. Other land designated UDA include the South Pointe, Stone Lakes, East Elk Grove Specific Plan, North Vineyard Station Specific Plan, Florin Station Planning Area, Vineyard Springs Community Plan, Sunrise Douglas Specific Plan, and Aerojet/Rio del Oro sites. Development on all of these sites is either approved, under review or in the planning stage. Therefore, the project would not be considered precedent-setting from this standpoint.

The project would not involve any changes to the General Plan text; therefore, it would not be considered growth-inducing from that standpoint.

The project also involves a rezoning from AG-80 to a Special Planning Area with several land use designations. Among the purposes of the Agricultural Land Use Zones are preserving agricultural land (Section 205-01(b)) and discouraging the premature and unnecessary conversion of agricultural land to urban uses (Section 205-01(c)). Although the rezoning of an AG-80 parcel to urban uses could encourage other requests for rezoning other agriculturally-zoned parcels, each application would be considered by the City on a project-by-project basis. The proposed rezoning for the Lent Ranch Marketplace would apply to the project site only and would not encompass other properties. For these reasons, the project would not be considered growth-inducing.

The project would involve the development of land on the boundary of the City of Elk Grove Urban Policy Area and Urban Service Boundary. As discussed in the following section, other projects within the (UPA/USB) boundary have either been approved or are proposed and under review. Therefore, the project would not be precedent-setting in that regard.

### **Development of or Encroachment on Open Space**

Development of open space is considered growth-inducing when it occurs on the fringes of built-up areas, but more commonly when urbanization occurs in isolated localities, leaving intervening areas of open space. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the General Plan intended for development to take place within the entirety of the Urban Service Boundary. In addition to the proposed project, there are also other projects that are either approved, proposed or planned for the area:

- The East Franklin Specific Plan, approved in April 2000, includes development of about 10,100 residential units in an area roughly bounded by the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, Elk Grove Boulevard, Bruceville Road, and Bilby Road. The specific plan area is about three miles west of the project site, and includes lands on the boundary of both the Urban Service Boundary and Urban Policy Area;
- The proposed South Pointe project, which would include a General Plan Amendment, Rezone and Tentative Subdivision Map, would allow the development of 1,000 low and medium density residential units on a 200-acre parcel adjacent to the project site on the west. An application for this project was submitted to the County in February 1999;
- The proposed Laguna Ridge Specific Plan, which is in the planning stages, would involve the development of about 7,300 residential units and about 360 acres of other uses, including commercial uses. The Specific Plan area is not on the boundary of the USB, but would expand the UPA and is within about 0.25 mile of the Lent Ranch site; and
- The approved East Elk Grove Specific Plan will involve development of up to 4,300 single-family residences and about 120 acres of other uses within an area bounded by Waterman Road, Grant Line Road, Bradshaw Road, and Bond Road. The Specific Plan area is about 1.3 miles east of the project site, and includes lands on the boundary of the Urban Policy Area.

A project can be considered “leap-frogging” if no projects are existing or envisioned within reasonable proximity to the project site. As shown, the proposed project is not the only project located at or near the

southern boundary of the Urban Policy Area. Other projects currently precede the proposed project in terms of project review by City or County decision-makers. In addition, there are developed uses immediately across SR-99 to the east. Because of its location within the Urban Policy Area and because this project is one of several at the southern Urban Policy Area boundary, it is not considered to be “leap-frogging.”

The Lent Ranch Marketplace project does not involve a modification to the USB. However, the proposed project, together with the other cumulative projects that are approved, planned or proposed in the area, could result in increasing growth pressure on the City or County to modify the Urban Policy Area and Urban Service Boundary. This increase in pressure, particularly to the south across Kammerer Road, may result in agricultural land being converted to urban type use for the economic benefit of the landowner. Any growth beyond the USB would be under the control of the City and County.

The General Plan states that the Urban Service Boundary is intended to be a permanent boundary “not subject to modification except under extraordinary circumstances.” It is the ultimate boundary of the urban area in the unincorporated County. The Urban Policy Area is tied more directly to the timing of growth, in that it defines the area expected to receive urban levels of public infrastructure and services within the planning period (by 2010).

Section III-G of the General Plan Land Use Element does provide a procedure for expanding the USB. The County and City must make certain findings with respect to the availability of land within the USB, air quality impacts, water supply, constraints imposed by open space easements, and potential impacts to “important natural resource areas, aquifer recharge lands or prime agricultural lands.” The result of these requirements would be to limit development outside the USB to areas in which environmental impacts would be limited. However, the General Plan also allows for expansion of the USB on a 4/5ths vote, based upon the findings that the expansion would “provide extraordinary environmental, social or economic benefits and opportunities to the County.” Therefore, the USB presents a constraint to growth-inducement south of the project site, but such growth could occur, depending on the City’s or County’s response to pressures in the long term. It should be pointed out that the City and County will retain the land use control within the area outside of the USB.

The demarcation of the Urban Policy and Urban Service Boundary Areas was considered a significant impact in the EIR for the Sacramento County General Plan Update, in that it was considered to result in the potential for induced growth in other counties, or in the outlying areas of Sacramento County. Because the EIR for the Sacramento County General Plan Update considered the designation of the Urban Policy and Urban Service Boundary Areas and assumed development within these areas as significant,

the significance finding is hereby incorporated by reference. However, the Findings of Fact adopted by the Board of Supervisors for the 1993 General Plan Update found that related policies listed below would mitigate impacts to a less-than-significant level:

LU-2, LU-6, and LU-7.

LU-8, LU-9, LU-14, LU-15.

LU-49,

LU-51, LU-52, LU-53, LU-54, LU-55, LU-56, LU-63, LU-64, LU-65, LU-70, LU-70A, LU-71, LU-73, LU-74, LU-75, OS-14, OS-14A, PF-9, PF-10.

PF-12, PF-12A, PF-13 and PF-14.

As noted in **Section 4.6, Public Services and Utilities**, and **Section 4.12, Land Use/Population, Employment and Housing**, the proposed project would be consistent with these policies.

## Conclusion

As the proposed project meets several of the growth-inducing criteria specified in this section, the proposed project is considered growth inducing.

## IMPACTS CREATED BY GROWTH

Because the project would support planned growth allowed for the General Plan, it could result in some secondary effects of growth that are associated with the adopted General Plan. The General Plan EIR identified eight unavoidable and significant impacts associated with the adoption of the General Plan. Findings were made that the effects of buildout under General Plan.

Unavoidable and significant impacts identified in the General Plan EIR within the USB included:

- Development would result in the conversion of prime farmland to urban uses;
- Development would result in urbanization of large areas of open space and would contribute to the cumulative loss of agricultural land and open space in the region.
- Loss of moist grassland, emergent wetland (marsh), and riparian wetland acreage and/or habitat values could result from development of new growth areas.
- Development would result in increased stationary and area source emission rates relative to the Air Resources Board (ARB) 2010 emission projections for non-attainment pollutants.

- Development would result in increased mobile source emission rates relative to the ARB year 2010 emission projections for non-attainment pollutants.
- Development could result in adverse impacts to cultural resources; and growth and development in Sacramento County will contribute incrementally to regional impacts on cultural resources.
- Development of the areas proposed would substantially alter the existing visual character of Sacramento County and limit visual access to large areas of open space, and could conflict with existing character areas of the County relative height, mass, and scale.
- Development of the proposed area within Sacramento County would reduce the amount of agricultural, open space, and rural lands in the area, thereby contributing to the cumulative loss of existing non-urban views within the region.

Impacts of growth associated with buildout of the area near the project site can be found in the cumulative analyses for each topic that was conducted in **Section 4.0** of this EIR. The cumulative analyses assume buildout of the General Plan including significant General Plan Amendments. Impacts associated with cumulative projects would contribute to those impacts identified above and discussed in the General Plan EIR.

Attempting to determine the environmental impacts created by growth outside the USB area would be speculative in that the size, type, and location of specific, future projects, which may be induced by the project are unknown at the present time. Furthermore, it is presumptuous to state conclusively that implementation of one project alone would induce growth in the surrounding area, as there are many variables that must be considered when examining the mechanics of urban growth (e.g., market forces, demographic trends, etc.). Impacts associated with any future development project that could be influenced by development of the project would be examined in depth during the environmental review conducted for that project as part of its review and approval process. Nonetheless, it would be likely that development outside the USB would result in similar impacts as those discussed in the General Plan EIR.