

INTRODUCTION

This *Environmental Impact Report (EIR)* on the City of Woodland *General Plan* has been prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CEQA mandates the preparation of draft and final environmental impact reports for projects or programs that have the potential of resulting in adverse impacts on the environment. Detailed requirements concerning both content and process are set forth in the California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3: *Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act* (hereinafter referred to as *State CEQA Guidelines*).

Volume I of this EIR includes the analysis of impacts, while Volume II contains the comments received on the Draft EIR and the responses to those comments.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS EIR

The purposes of CEQA (and thus EIRs) are summarized in Article 1 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*. Article 1 reads, in part, as follows:

§15002. General Concepts.

(a) Basic Purposes of CEQA. The basic purposes of CEQA are to:

- (1) Inform governmental decision-makers and the public about the potential, significant environmental effects of proposed activities.
- (2) Identify ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced.
- (3) Prevent significant, avoidable damage to the environment by requiring changes in projects through the use of alternatives or mitigation measures when the governmental agency finds the changes to be feasible.
- (4) Disclose to the public the reasons why a governmental agency approved the project in the manner the agency chose if significant environmental effects are involved.

Subsection (f) of this section summarizes the purpose and content of an EIR:

(f) Environmental Impact Reports and Negative Declarations. An environmental impact report (EIR) is the public document used by the governmental agency to analyze the significant environmental effects of a proposed project, to identify alternatives, and to disclose possible ways to reduce or avoid the possible environmental damage.

- (1) An EIR is prepared when the public agency finds substantial evidence that the project may have a significant effect on the environment. (See §15064(a)(1).)

Subsection (g) summarizes the concept of "significant effect":

(g) Significant Effect on the Environment. A significant effect on the environment is defined as a substantial adverse change in the physical conditions which exist in the area affected by the proposed project. (See §15382). Further, when an EIR identifies a significant effect, the

government agency approving the project must make findings on whether the adverse environmental effects have been substantially reduced or if not, why not. (See §15091.)

§15121. Informational Document

- (a) An EIR is an informational document which will inform public agency decision makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effect of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project. The public agency shall consider the information in the EIR along with other information which may be presented to the agency.
- (b) While the information in the EIR does not control the agency's ultimate discretion on the project, the agency must respond to each significant effect identified in the EIR by making findings under Section 15091 and, if necessary, by making a statement of overriding considerations under Section 15093.
- (c) The information in an EIR may constitute substantial evidence in the record to support the agency's action on the project if its decision is later challenged in court.

This EIR serves two basic purposes. First, it establishes the environmental framework for adoption of the *General Plan*, providing information to the public, Planning Commission, and City Council concerning the potential consequences of adopting the plan, and, second, it serves as a first-tier EIR for subsequent EIRs on projects implementing the *General Plan* (e.g., specific plans, individual projects).

RELATIONSHIP OF THE GENERAL PLAN AND EIR

The *State CEQA Guidelines* provides the following general directions concerning the coordination of planning and environmental impact assessment:

§15080. General.

To the extent possible, the EIR process should be combined with the existing planning, review, and project approval process used by each public agency.

The *State CEQA Guidelines* provides for combining the EIR with the general plan as follows:

§15166. EIR as Part of a General Plan.

- (a) The requirements for preparing an EIR on a local general plan, element, or amendment thereof will be satisfied by using the general plan, or element document, as the EIR and no separate EIR will be required, if:
 - (1) the general plan addresses all the points required to be in an EIR by Article 9 of these Guidelines; and
 - (2) the document contains a special section or a cover sheet identifying where the general plan document addresses each of the points required.

This *Environmental Impact Report (EIR)* documents the environmental considerations incorporated into the process of preparing the *General Plan* and evaluates the environmental implications and effects of the plan. In accordance with the two sections of the *State CEQA Guidelines* cited above, and in an effort to minimize repetition of information, three separate General Plan documents are being used to satisfy the requirements for a EIR. These are: 1) the *General Plan Policy Document*; 2) the *General Plan Background Report*, which describes existing conditions and trends in Woodland; and 3) this *Environmental Impact Report*, which assesses the environmental implications and effects of the *General Plan*. Together, these three documents address all of the issues required by state law to be covered in a EIR.

USE OF THIS EIR AS A FIRST-TIER EIR/MASTER ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The precise format of an EIR is not dictated by CEQA or the *State CEQA Guidelines*, but is left to the discretion of the lead agency preparing the EIR. Several types of EIR or alternatives for formatting EIRs are described in the *State CEQA Guidelines*. Of particular relevance to a general plan EIR are First-tier EIRs and Master Environmental Assessments (MEAs).

First-tier EIRs analyze cumulative impacts, allowing future, more-detailed EIRs to reference the first-tier EIRs for the cumulative impact analysis.

The *State CEQA Guidelines* describes a Master Environmental Assessment as follows:

§15169. Master Environmental Assessment.

- (a) General. A public agency may prepare a Master Environmental Assessment, inventory, or data base for all, or a portion of, the territory subject to its control in order to provide information which may be used or referenced in EIRs or Negative Declarations. Neither the content, the format, nor the procedures to be used to develop a Master Environmental Assessment are prescribed by these Guidelines. The descriptions contained in this section are advisory. A Master Environmental Assessment is suggested solely as an approach to identify and organize environmental information for a region or area of the state.

The chief advantage of First-tier EIRs and Master Environmental Assessments (MEAs) is that they can be used to streamline CEQA compliance for a broad range of subsequent projects. First-tier EIRs or MEAs can be used as the basis for preparing initial studies on individual projects; they can be used as the basis for issuing negative declarations on individual projects; and they can be referenced in subsequent EIRs to address major and cumulative impacts of projects, allowing project-level EIRs to focus on more site-specific impacts. Preparing a First-tier EIR or MEA does not obviate the need for environmental analysis on individual projects, but it can expedite and simplify subsequent environmental reviews under CEQA.

For these reasons, this EIR has been organized and is intended to be used as both a First-tier EIR and a Master Environmental Assessment.

FORECASTING, DEGREE OF SPECIFICITY, AND SPECULATION

The *State CEQA Guidelines* includes the following discussions regarding forecasting, speculation, and the degree of specificity required in an EIR:

§15144. Forecasting

Drafting an EIR or preparing a Negative Declaration necessarily involves some degree of forecasting. While foreseeing the unforeseeable is not possible, an agency must use its best efforts to find out and disclose all that it reasonably can.

§15145. Speculation

If, after thorough investigation, a Lead Agency finds that a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, the agency should note its conclusion and terminate discussion of the impact.

§15146. Degree of Specificity

The degree of specificity required in an EIR will correspond to the degree of specificity involved in the underlying activity which is described in the EIR.

- (a) An EIR on a construction project will necessarily be more detailed in the specific effects of the project than will be an EIR on the adoption of a local general plan or comprehensive zoning ordinance because the effects of the construction can be predicted with greater accuracy.
- (b) An EIR on a project such as the adoption or amendment of a comprehensive zoning ordinance or a local general plan should focus on the secondary effects that can be expected to follow from the adoption or amendment, but the EIR need not be as detailed as an EIR on the specific construction projects that might follow.

This EIR estimates the amount of development under the *General Plan* that could be expected by 2020 and reaches conclusions regarding the severity of impacts based on these estimates. In some cases, especially where natural resources will be converted, the possible effects of development beyond 2020 are also discussed, but no conclusions concerning the significance of these impacts are reached, as such conclusions are deemed too speculative for the purposes of this EIR given uncertainty about long-term growth trends (beyond 2020) and future technological advances. The EIR focuses particularly on the cumulative impacts of development under the *General Plan* through 2020. The EIR is necessarily less detailed than would be an EIR on a specific development project. Future development projects will be required to conduct environmental analysis and analyze site-specific impacts.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

The main body of this *Environmental Impact Report* is divided into ten chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 (Project Description and Impact Summary) describes the project setting, defines the project, explains Woodland's General Plan Update process, and summarizes the significant environmental effects of the plan.

Chapter 2 (Assumptions and Development Estimates) summarizes and explains the assumptions used in preparing the development estimates upon which the EIR assessment is based. It includes a discussion of the methodology used to calculate new development potential and projections for projected housing, employment, and employment growth that will be accommodated under the *General Plan*.

Chapter 3 (Land Use, Housing, and Population) evaluates the land use (including agriculture), housing, and population impacts of the plan.

Chapter 4 (Transportation and Circulation) assesses transportation and circulation impacts, including roadways, public transit, non-motorized transportation, and air transportation.

Chapter 5 (Public Facilities and Services) reviews impacts on public facilities and services, including water supply and delivery; wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal; storm drainage; law enforcement; fire protection; solid waste collection and disposal; and public utilities.

Chapter 6 (Recreational, Educational, and Community Services) assesses the plan's impact on recreational, educational, and community services, including parks, schools, child care services, and library services.

Chapter 7 (Historic and Archaeological Resources) addresses the plan's impacts on historic and archaeological resources.

Chapter 8 (Environmental Resources) examines the plan's impacts on natural resources including water resources, mineral resources, vegetation and wildlife resources, and air quality.

Chapter 9 (Health and Safety) reviews health and safety impacts of the plan, including seismic and geologic hazards, flooding, fire hazards, noise, hazardous wastes, and airport crash hazards.

Chapter 10 (Alternatives and Other Mandatory CEQA Sections) addresses mandatory EIR sections, including alternatives, significant irreversible effects, growth-inducing impacts, cumulative impacts, and mitigation monitoring.

Appendices: Several technical appendices include materials too detailed or voluminous to be included in the main body of the *EIR*.

The *General Plan* and this *EIR* were prepared simultaneously in an effort to identify early on potentially significant implications of the plan and to build into the plan policies and programs to minimize or avoid these adverse implications. The format and content of the environmental impact analysis in this *EIR* reflect this approach to preparing the *General Plan*.

Accordingly, for each subject addressed in Chapters 3 through 9, the discussion is generally broken into the following seven parts:

Environmental Setting: This section briefly summarizes pertinent information concerning existing conditions. Since the *General Plan Background Report* constitutes the comprehensive setting for the *EIR*, this section focuses on the highlights, while referring the reader to appropriate sections of the *Background Report*.

Methodology: This section discusses the assumptions and methodology used to identify implications and to assess impacts.

Implications of the Land Use Diagram: This section projects conditions that could result from the development of the land uses shown on the *General Plan Land Use Diagram* without consideration

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of the policies and programs included in the *General Plan Policy Document*. This part focuses primarily on implications of estimated development at the year 2020.

General Plan Policy Response: This section references specific policies and programs contained in the *General Plan Policy Document* that address the implications identified in the previous part. While this discussion focuses primarily on policies and programs that respond directly to the potential negative implications of the Land Use Diagram, it also in some cases identifies policies or programs that reduce impacts that may not be considered significant.

Impacts: This section describes any negative environmental impacts of the Land Use Diagram which would remain unresolved or potentially unresolved by the policies and programs contained in the *Policy Document*. The discussion includes an assessment of the severity of the impact, including a conclusion as to whether impacts are considered significant according to *CEQA*. The impacts are characterized as "significant," "potentially significant," or "less-than-significant."

Mitigation Measures: This section identifies mitigation measures that could lessen or eliminate negative impacts identified as "significant" or "potentially significant" according to *CEQA* standards, or, in some cases, to identify additional mitigation for impacts that are considered "less-than-significant."