
4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND ASSUMPTIONS USED

The following is an introduction to the environmental analysis of the project-specific as well as the cumulative impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed General Plan Update and its associated project components. This introduction describes the general assumptions used in the analysis. The reader is referred to the individual technical sections of the EIR, Sections 4.1 to 4.13, regarding the specific assumptions and methodologies used in the analysis for that particular technical subject.

4.0.1 ANALYSIS ASSUMPTIONS GENERALLY USED TO EVALUATE THE IMPACTS OF THE CITY OF PINOLE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE, SPECIFIC PLAN, AND ZONING CODE UPDATE

BASELINE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS ASSUMED IN THE EIR

Section 15125(a) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires that an environmental impact report (EIR) include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of a project, as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published. The State CEQA Guidelines also specify that this description of the physical environmental conditions should serve as the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether the impacts of a project are considered significant.

The environmental setting conditions of the City of Pinole and its surrounding area are described in detail in the individual technical sections of the DEIR (see Sections 4.1 through 4.13). In general, these sections describe the setting conditions of the city and the surrounding area, as they generally existed when the NOP for the project was released originally on December 18, 2006 and then re-circulated on February 17, 2009, with the addition of the Three Corridors Specific Plan to the Project. In general, conditions as they existed in February 2009 have been utilized for the EIR analysis. In addition, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) utilize the 2007 ABAG projections for their plans and in utilizing the ABAG 2007 population projections this DEIR is also consistent with the BAAQMD and MTC plans.

Table 4.0-1 presents the status of large-scale development projects in the proposed update to the General Plan Planning Area (Planning Area), as well as large-scale development in Contra Costa County, including other incorporated cities within the county such as Richmond and Hercules. These projects are assumed under cumulative conditions.

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**TABLE 4.0-1
PROPOSED AND RECENTLY APPROVED LARGE-SCALE RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL PROJECTS
IN THE PLANNING AREA AND SURROUNDING REGION**

Project	Location	City/County	Project Description	Total Acres	Residential Units (net new)	Nonresidential Acres or Square Feet	Status
North Richmond Specific Plan	Intersection of Pittsburg Avenue and Richmond Parkway	Contra Costa	General Plan Amendment to allow development of site into a variety of land uses (residential, commercial, industrial, and open space)	254	2,100	169 acres	proposed
The Bay Point Waterfront Strategic Plan	Terminus of McAvoy Road in the Bay Point area of eastern Contra Costa County	Contra Costa	General Plan Amendment to allow creation of a full-scale marina and associated uses (offices, retail, yacht club, and medium-density residential)	290	450	267.5 acres	proposed
The Hilltown Project	Bounded by John Muir Parkway to the south, San Pablo Avenue to the west, the Victoria By The Bay development to the north, and Interstate 80 to the east	Hercules	Remediation and rezone of former industrial site to allow for residential uses	44	640	N/A	proposed
Hercules New Town Center	Immediately southwest of the I-80 and SR 4 interchange and bounded by SR 4 to the north, Sycamore Avenue to the south, I-80 to the east, and San Pablo Avenue to the west	Hercules	Mixed-use, transit-oriented development	35	400	140,000 square feet	approved

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Project	Location	City/County	Project Description	Total Acres	Residential Units (net new)	Nonresidential Acres or Square Feet	Status
Sycamore North	Between Tsushima and South Front	Hercules	A for-sale residential component (47 units), a rental residential component (49 units), and a retail component, contained within two contiguous buildings that are joined at the center of the site by a plaza and tower	N/A	96	40,000 square feet	approved
Sycamore Crossing	Downtown Hercules	Hercules	A mix of retail, office, and residential uses. The first phase of Sycamore Crossing (also known as Sycamore South) will include 40,000 square feet of ground-floor retail space with a mix of 2- and 3-story offices and apartments above.	14	284	46,000 square feet	approved
Hercules Waterfront	Located within the former Hercules Powder Company property in the City of Hercules, west of I-80	Hercules	A 40-acre site planned to be a transit-oriented, mixed-use, traditional neighborhood project	40	1,200	369,000 square feet	approved
Circle S aka "The District"	San Pablo Avenue and El Portal Avenue	San Pablo	Mixed-use concept to include housing, retail, entertainment, and open space	8.5	N/A	69,900 square feet	proposed
Mission Plaza Project	Between San Pablo Avenue and Broadway Avenue	San Pablo	Development of approximately 3–4 stories of residential above commercial	1.5	90	N/A	proposed

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Project	Location	City/County	Project Description	Total Acres	Residential Units (net new)	Nonresidential Acres or Square Feet	Status
Powell Place 1800 23rd	23 rd Street and Market Avenue	San Pablo	31 condo units above approximately 6,000 square feet of commercial with parking in the back	0.5	31	6,000 square feet	proposed
Walgreens	College Center	San Pablo	Full service pharmacy and drive-through	N/A	none	14,820 square feet	approved
Richmond Revival Project	Lakeside Drive	Richmond	Drugstore, banks, convenience shops	N/A	none	41,761 square feet	proposed

Source: Contra Costa County, 2010; City of Hercules, 2010; City of San Pablo, 2010; City of Richmond, 2010

GENERAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT ASSUMPTIONS

Future growth in the General Plan Planning Area is guided by the land uses identified in the General Plan Land Use Map (see **Figure 3.0-4**). The impact analysis (both temporary [i.e., construction-related] and operational effects) is based on these proposed land use patterns. The EIR also evaluates the indirect environmental effects of construction and operation of the land uses and transportation improvements that may take place under the proposed General Plan Update and its associated project components. **Table 3.0-1** identifies the land use acreages that currently exist within the city, the current Sphere of Influence (SOI), and the Three Corridors Specific Plan areas that make up the remainder of the Planning Area. **Table 3.0-3** shows land use acreages that are being proposed under the project.

The Draft EIR analysis is based on 2030 buildout projections. The City is largely built out and most large land holdings in the city have been developed. Land and development costs are high in the city due to the limited supply of vacant land. In addition to the high land cost, the increasing cost of constructing new housing, the recent economic downturn and credit crisis, and site constraints such as topography and availability of community services also inhibit new housing opportunities in the city, particularly affordable housing opportunities. As such, it is anticipated that the City of Pinole will have minimal growth in the future since the city currently includes approximately 64.69 acres of vacant land zoned for residential development outside of the Three Corridors Specific Plan areas. This would result in a development potential of 230 additional housing units and therefore an additional 665 persons in the City, but outside the Specific Plan areas.

The City does not anticipate expanding its Sphere of Influence (SOI) or annexing any land into the city in the foreseeable future. However, the proposed General Plan Update would accommodate some opportunities for new development and redevelopment on the city's primary commercial corridors via the Three Corridors Specific Plan. Accordingly, buildout projections for the General Plan Update focus on the land use changes that increase development potential within the Specific Plan areas. The Specific Plan areas contain approximately 300 acres of predominantly developed land. At buildout, if all of the properties within the Specific Plan areas were to develop according to the proposed provisions of the land use and development standards contained in the Specific Plan, the city would be expected to experience increased development over the course of the next 20 years as indicated in **Table 4.0-2** below.

Residential development within the Three Corridors Specific Plan area would develop consistent with the methodology that has been described in Appendix A of the Specific Plan. Development projections for the residential areas were based on average densities per housing unit, the actual development potential for residentially designated areas, based on site constraints, the City's occupancy rate of 2.89 persons per household for single-family units, as well as economic analyses provided by Bay Area Economics (City of Pinole 2010).

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**TABLE 4.0-2
SPECIFIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTIONS**

Corridor	Residential (Units)	Retail (s.f.)	Office (s.f.)	Industrial (s.f.)
San Pablo Avenue	885	322,172	336,253	426,692
Pinole Valley Road	141	238,708	105,038	1,239
Appian Way	244	561,260	468,449	48,352
Existing Total	1,270	1,122,140	909,740	476,283
San Pablo Avenue	1,119	552,927	307,233	472,578
Pinole Valley Road	351	192,603	386,843	0
Appian Way	877	807,698	728,129	0
Proposed Total	2,346	1,553,228	1,422,206	472,578
Difference	1,076	431,088*	512,466*	(3,705)
Projections	1076	150,0008*	150,0008*	(3,705)_

Note: * Because the proposed land use designations would accommodate more commercial development than is expected to occur during the General Plan cycle, these development projections limit growth in the commercial and office sectors to 150,000 square feet above the existing land use capacity by the year 2030.

Source: City of Pinole, 2010

As shown, implementation of the Specific Plan could result in an additional 1,076 housing units in the Planning Area by 2030. Therefore, the DEIR assumes that the total population of the city (excluding all areas outside the current city limits but within the City's Sphere of Influence) could increase from the current (2010) population of 20,100 to 23,875 at buildout of the General Plan Update (2.89 persons per household x 1,306 housing units + existing population of 20,100 = 23,875 persons). The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) projections estimate that the City of Pinole will have a population of 21,800 in 2030 (Contra Costa LAFCo, 2008). Therefore, the city's projected population after implementation of the General Plan Update and Three Corridors Specific Plan would be 2,075, or roughly 9.5 percent more than the ABAG estimate. Development of commercial, office, and industrial uses under the proposed Three Corridors Specific Plan will result in an additional 2,050 office employees (431088/250 = 2050), an additional 862 retail employees (431088/500 = 862), and a loss of 6 employees (-3705/700 = -6) for industrial uses by 2030. These non-residential development was projected based on the following industry standards for number of employees per square feet of non-residential use:

- Office: 1 employee per 250 square feet
- Retail: 1 employee per 500 square feet
- Industrial: 1 employee per 700 square feet

The reader is referred to Section 4.2, Population, Housing and Employment for further discussions on employment trends for the GPU Planning Area.

Subsequent requests for increases in development potential beyond what is set forth in the General Plan would require approval of an amendment to the General Plan and are outside the scope of the analysis of this EIR.

STRUCTURE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

Sections 4.1 through 4.13 of this DEIR contain a detailed description of current setting conditions (including applicable regulatory setting), an evaluation of the direct and indirect environmental effects resulting from the implementation of the proposed General Plan Update, Specific Plan, and Zoning Code Update, identification of proposed General Plan policies and action items that mitigate the environmental effect, additional feasible mitigation measures, identification of whether significant environmental effects of the project would remain after application of proposed policies and action items, and feasible mitigation measures. The individual technical sections of the DEIR follow the following format:

Existing Setting

This subsection includes a description of the physical setting conditions associated with the technical area of discussion, consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125. As previously identified, the existing setting is based on conditions as they existed when the NOP for the project was released on February 17, 2009.

Regulatory Framework

This subsection consists of the identification of applicable federal, state, regional, and local plans, policies, laws, and regulations that apply to the technical area of discussion.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This subsection identifies direct and indirect environmental effects associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update (includes the Three Corridors Specific Plan and updates to the City's Zoning Code) and identifies those proposed updated General Plan policies and implementation actions that mitigate the environmental effect, as well as any of the existing regulations and ordinances that do the same. Standards of significance are identified and utilized to determine whether identified environmental effects are considered "potentially significant" or "significant" and require the application of mitigation measures. Each environmental impact analysis is identified numerically (e.g., Impact 4.1.1 – Consistency with Relevant Land Use Planning Documents).

Mitigation measures were developed through a thorough review of the environmental effects of the updated General Plan by consultants with technical expertise as well as by environmental and engineering professionals. After identification of proposed General Plan policies and implementation actions that mitigate the environmental impact being discussed, any additional feasible mitigation measures that could minimize significant adverse impacts are discussed, after which the impact discussion notes whether the impact has been mitigated to a less than significant level or remains significant and unavoidable.

Cumulative Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures

This subsection is an analysis of the proposed project's contribution to cumulative impacts to the environment. The analysis focuses on whether the project's contribution is "cumulatively considerable" (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130). A cumulative impact occurs from the change in the environment that results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a

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period of time (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15355(b)). Accordingly, the cumulative setting includes related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects.

DEFINITION OF CUMULATIVE SETTING

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 requires that EIRs include an analysis of the cumulative impacts of a project when the project's effect is considered cumulatively considerable. In general, the cumulative setting conditions considered in this Draft EIR are based on:

- **Local Adopted General Plans.** The existing land use plans in the Pinole region, including those of Contra Costa County and the cities of Richmond and Hercules.
- **Large-Scale Development Projects.** Consideration of large-scale proposed and approved development projects listed in **Table 4.0-1**. This list of projects is intended to describe large-scale proposed, approved, and reasonably foreseeable future development activities in the Pinole region that, when considered with the proposed General Plan Update, Specific Plan, and Zoning Code Update, have the potential to have cumulatively considerable impacts. It is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of projects in the Pinole region.
- **Effect of Regional Conditions.** Consideration of background traffic volumes and patterns on state highways (e.g., Interstate 80), background air quality conditions, and other associated environmental conditions that occur within the Bay Area, both within and outside of the Planning Area. The reader is referred to Section 4.2, Population/ Housing /Employment for further details on regional development projections set forth by ABAG.
- **Consideration of Existing Development Patterns.** Consideration of the current environmental conditions of existing development and past land use activities in the region.

Each technical section of the Draft EIR includes a description of the geographic extent of the cumulative setting based on the characteristics of the environmental issue under consideration as set forth in Section 15130(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines.

Consideration of Cumulative Impacts

Each technical section in the DEIR considers whether the project's effect on anticipated cumulative setting conditions is cumulatively considerable (i.e., a significant effect). "Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant, under cumulative conditions, when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects [CEQA Guidelines, Section 15065(a)(3)]. The determination of whether the project's impact on cumulative conditions is considerable is based on a number of factors, including consideration of applicable public agency standards, consultation with public agencies, and expert opinion. The environmental effects of potential development of the City's Planning Area are incorporated in the cumulative impact analysis. Section 5.0, Cumulative Impacts, provides a summary of the cumulative impacts associated with the project.

REFERENCES

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