

5 OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 GROWTH INDUCEMENT

CEQA specifies that growth-inducing impacts of a project must be addressed in an EIR (Public Resources Code, Section 21100[b][5]). Specifically, Section 15126.2(d) of the California Code of Regulations states that the EIR shall:

Discuss the ways in which the 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 (a major expansion of a wastewater treatment plant might, for example, allow for more construction in service areas). Increases in the population may tax existing community service facilities, requiring construction of new facilities that could cause significant environmental effects. Also, discuss the characteristics of some projects which may encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively. It must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.

Direct growth inducement would result if a project involved construction of new housing, which would facilitate new population to an area. Indirect growth inducement would result, for instance, if implementing a project resulted in any of the following:

- ▲ substantial new permanent employment opportunities (e.g., commercial, industrial, or governmental enterprises);
- ▲ substantial short-term employment opportunities (e.g., construction employment) that indirectly stimulates the need for additional housing and services to support the new temporary employment demand; and/or
- ▲ removal of an obstacle to additional growth and development, such as removing a constraint on a required public utility or service (e.g., construction of a major sewer line with excess capacity through an undeveloped area).

The State CEQA Guidelines do not distinguish between planned and unplanned growth for purposes of considering whether a project would foster additional growth. Therefore, for purposes of this EIR, to reach the conclusion that a project is growth-inducing as defined by CEQA, the EIR must find that it would foster (i.e., promote, encourage, allow) additional growth in economic activity, population, or housing, regardless of whether the growth is already approved by and consistent with local plans. The conclusion does not determine that induced growth is beneficial or detrimental, consistent with Section 15126.2(d) of the State CEQA Guidelines.

If the analysis conducted for the EIR results in a determination that a project is growth-inducing, the next question is whether that growth may cause adverse effects on the environment. Environmental effects resulting from induced growth (i.e., growth-induced effects) fit the CEQA definition of “indirect” effects in Section 15358(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines. These indirect or secondary effects of growth may result in significant environmental impacts. CEQA does not require that the EIR speculate unduly about the precise location and site-specific characteristics of significant, indirect effects caused by induced growth, but a good-faith effort is required to disclose what is feasible to assess. Potential secondary effects of growth could include consequences – such as conversion of open space to developed uses, increased demand on community and public services and infrastructure, increased traffic and noise, degradation of

air and water quality, or degradation or loss of plant and wildlife habitat – that are the result of growth fostered by the project.

The decision to allow those projects that result from induced growth is the subject of separate discretionary processes by the lead agency responsible for considering such projects. Because the decision to allow growth is subject to separate discretionary decision making, and such decision making is itself subject to CEQA, the analysis of growth-inducing effects is not intended to determine site-specific environmental impacts and specific mitigation for the potentially induced growth. Rather, the discussion is intended to disclose the potential for environmental effects to occur more generally, such that decision makers are aware that additional environmental effects are a possibility if growth-inducing projects are approved. The decision of whether impacts do occur, their extent, and the ability to mitigate them is appropriately left to consideration by the agency responsible for approving such projects at such times as complete applications for development are submitted.

5.1.1 Growth Variables

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 nonresidential 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 policies or conditions.

5.1.2 Growth-Inducing Impacts of the Project

The SOIA would remove an obstacle to the future and annexation and development of the site. Further, approval of the SOIA would allow the City of Elk Grove and other service providers to plan for future urbanization of the approximately 480-acre site as an area planned for potential urban growth. However, approval of the SOIA would not authorize changes in land use or governance by the City unless the project site is annexed to the City. Annexation of the project site to the City is not an action under consideration for this project. Rather, LAFCo is requested to consider whether the Bilby Ridge site should be included in the SOI for the City as a logical expansion of potential urban growth for the City. If the SOIA were approved, land use activities within the project site would remain under the jurisdiction of Sacramento County until annexation is approved by LAFCo at some future time.

The Bilby Ridge SOIA does not include land use designations or zoning as specific approval actions. Proposed land use and zoning designations for a site are provided at the time a request for annexation of the site is submitted to LAFCo. However, in order for LAFCo to understand and fully evaluate the direct and indirect impacts associated with consideration of the Bilby Ridge SOIA, it must also consider the reasonable development pattern and intensity that could occur at the site from subsequent land use approvals. The project applicant has identified land use and development capacities for the project site that could allow 1,846 residential dwelling units (5,540 residents) and 4,359 jobs (Table 2-1 and Exhibit 2-4). The SOIA area is located within the City of Elk Grove Planning Area as established in the 2003 General Plan and has been identified for potential urban development in the proposed General Plan Update as part of the West Study Area. For additional discussion of impacts associated with growth inducement, refer to Section 3.11, “Population and Housing.”

EFFECTS ASSOCIATED WITH POPULATION GROWTH

Approval of the SOIA area and future annexation would foster short-term and long-term economic growth as a result of new construction, increased residential units, and employment. Construction activities would generate the need for construction workers during this time period and is anticipated to utilize people who are employed in the construction industry in the region. Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect that

construction workers for the project would not relocate to the City for a temporary job. During operation, it is anticipated that up to 5,540 new residents would occupy the on-site residences and that the commercial uses could employ 4,359 workers. Increased City resident and employment levels are considered to result in direct growth-inducing effects. The environmental impacts associated with these direct growth-inducing effects are described throughout this EIR.

EFFECTS ASSOCIATED WITH REMOVAL OF BARRIERS TO POPULATION GROWTH

The project would remove barriers to population growth insofar as the project would expand the City's sphere of influence and provide the path to future annexation to the City for land use and infrastructure planning. This could place pressure on areas adjacent to the SOIA area to seek development entitlements or annexation applications.

EFFECTS ASSOCIATED WITH EMPLOYMENT GROWTH AND OTHER ECONOMIC-RELATED GROWTH

Facilitation of new employment, goods, and services from future development of the SOIA area could result in increased economic growth within the City and would be considered an indirect growth-inducing effect. Potential secondary effects of growth could include environmental consequences, such as conversion of open space to developed uses, increased demand on community and public services and infrastructure, increased traffic and noise, degradation of air and water quality, or degradation or loss of plant and wildlife habitat. While the SOIA may induce or encourage population growth in the neighboring unincorporated area through additional SOIA requests, any growth outside of the SOIA area would require its own LAFCo SOIA and environmental review outside of this SOIA process.

5.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

CEQA requires that EIRs assess whether the proposed project would result in significant irreversible changes to the physical environment. The State CEQA Guidelines discuss three categories of significant irreversible changes that should be considered. Each is addressed below.

- ▲ **Changes in Land Use Which Commit Future Generations** – the SOIA would not change the existing land use designations or authority.
- ▲ **Irreversible Damage from Environmental Accidents** – the SOIA does not include construction or any other activities that would be anticipated to result in accidental spills or explosion of a hazardous material.
- ▲ **Consumption of Nonrenewable Resources** – the SOIA would not directly result in increased energy consumption, conversion of agricultural lands, or lost access to mining reserves. To the extent that the SOIA facilitates the eventual annexation and future development of the project area, the SOIA could result in indirect conversion of agricultural land and consumption of fossil fuels and other non-renewable or slowly renewable resources through the operation of vehicles and equipment for site grading and construction activities and additional electricity, water, and natural gas demand following development. The reader is referred to Section 3.7, “Energy,” regarding energy demands of future development of the SOIA area.

5.3 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

Detailed mitigation measures are identified in Chapter 3 of the DEIR that are intended to mitigate project effects to the extent feasible. All of these mitigation measures are identified in ES-1. After implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, nearly all of the adverse effects associated with the project would be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

Following is a listing of significant and unavoidable impacts associated with implementation of the SOIA.

Aesthetics (Section 3.1)

- ▲ Impact 3.1-1: Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings
- ▲ Impact 3.1-2: Create a new source of substantial light or glare

Agricultural Resources (Section 3.2)

- ▲ Impact 3.2-1: Direct conversion of Important Farmland and prime agricultural land to non-agricultural use
- ▲ Impact 3.2-2: Conflict with existing Williamson Act contracts
- ▲ Impact 3.2-3: Involve other changes in the existing environment which, because of their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use
- ▲ Cumulative loss of Important Farmland and prime agricultural land

Air Quality (Section 3.3)

- ▲ Impact 3.3-1: Construction emissions of criteria air pollutants and ozone precursors
- ▲ Impact 3.3-2: Long-term operational emissions of air pollutants
- ▲ Cumulative air quality impacts to the nonattainment status of Sacramento Valley Air Basin

Biological Resources (Section 3.4)

- ▲ Impact 3.4-2: Disturbance to or loss of special-status wildlife species and habitat: Swainson's hawk and other nesting raptors
- ▲ Cumulative loss of Swainson's hawk habitat

Energy (Section 3.6)

- ▲ Impact 3.6-2: Demand for energy services and facilities
- ▲ Cumulative demand for energy services and facilities

Greenhouse Gases (Section 3.7)

- ▲ Impact 3.7-1: Project-generated greenhouse gas emissions

Land Use (Section 3.9)

- ▲ Impact 3.9-4: Conversion of open space
- ▲ Cumulative loss of open space

Noise and Vibration (Section 3.10)

- ▲ Impact 3.10-1: Construction-generated noise
- ▲ Cumulative construction-generated noise

Population and Housing (Section 3.11)

- ▲ Impact 3.11-1: Induce substantial population growth
- ▲ Cumulative population growth

Public Services and Recreation (Section 3.12)

- ▲ Impact 3.12-1: Increased demand for fire protection and emergency medical services

- ▲ Impact 3.12-2: Increased demand for law enforcement services
- ▲ Cumulative fire protection and law enforcement service impacts

Transportation and Circulation (Section 3.13)

- ▲ Impact 3.13-1: Impacts to roadway operation
- ▲ Impact 3.13-2: Impacts to freeway facilities
- ▲ Cumulative traffic operation impacts on roadways and freeway facilities

Utilities (Section 3.14)

- ▲ Impact 3.14-1: Require or result in the construction of new or expanded water or wastewater treatment facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects
- ▲ Cumulative water and wastewater facility impacts

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