

1 INTRODUCTION

This final environmental impact report (Final EIR) has been prepared by the City of Elk Grove (City), as lead agency, in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines (CCR Section 15132). This Final EIR contains responses to comments received on the draft environmental impact report (Draft EIR) for the New Zoo at Elk Grove (New Zoo, or Project). The Final EIR consists of the Draft EIR and this document, which includes comments on the Draft EIR, responses to those comments, and revisions to the Draft EIR.

1.1 PURPOSE AND INTENDED USES OF THIS FINAL EIR

CEQA requires a lead agency that has prepared a Draft EIR to consult with and obtain comments from responsible and trustee agencies that have jurisdiction by law with respect to the Project, and to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIR. The Final EIR is the mechanism for responding to these comments. This Final EIR has been prepared to respond to comments received on the Draft EIR, which are reproduced in this document; and to present corrections, revisions, and other clarifications and amplifications to the Draft EIR, including Project updates, made in response to these comments and as a result of the City's ongoing planning efforts. The Final EIR will be used to support the City's decision regarding whether to approve the New Zoo at Elk Grove.

This Final EIR will also be used by CEQA responsible and trustee agencies to ensure that they have met their requirements under CEQA before deciding whether to approve or permit Project elements over which they have jurisdiction. It may also be used by other state, regional, and local agencies that may have an interest in resources that could be affected by the Project or that have jurisdiction over portions of the Project.

Responsible, trustee, and interested agencies include:

- ▶ California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
- ▶ Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board: Waste Discharge Requirements
- ▶ Sacramento Area Sewer District (SASD)
- ▶ Sacramento County Water Agency (SCWA)
- ▶ Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (SMAQMD)

1.2 PROJECT LOCATION

The Project site (Assessor's Parcel Numbers [APNs] 132-0320-010, -001 and -002; and 132-2390-006) is located at the northwest intersection of Kammerer Road and Lotz Parkway in the City of Elk Grove. The Project site is a fallow field surrounded by single-family residences to the east, agriculture to the south and west, and active construction of a new residential subdivision to the north. Historically, the Project site was used as rangeland for cattle from April to December. The Project site is within the Livable Employment Area Community Plan and the core of the site has a land use designation of Parks and Open Space (P/O). The Livable Employment Area Community Plan includes consideration of the Project site as a zoological park.

1.3 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the New Zoo at Elk Grove are to:

- ▶ construct a new larger, sustainable zoo with expanded habitats and facilities to support a broader range of animal species;
- ▶ meet current animal care Association of Zoos and Aquariums standards for animals housed in the zoo;

- ▶ increase access to the zoo with adequate parking facilities, easy accessibility, and access to transit and trails;
- ▶ increase and expand on the zoo mission and mission impact to inspire appreciation, respect and a connection with wildlife and nature through education, recreation, and conservation;
- ▶ provide enhanced visitor experience through education, overnight stay, event spaces, and animal encounters.

1.4 SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The Project would:

- ▶ Result in a new special plan area (SPA) for the Project site that would establish a land use plan and allowed uses for properties within the Zoological Park SPA,
- ▶ Result in development of a zoological park that would include various facilities and buildings to support the New Zoo,
- ▶ Result in construction of off-site public infrastructure improvements, and
- ▶ Develop an animal browse program to address nutritional needs of the herbivore and omnivore species housed at the New Zoo.

1.5 MAJOR CONCLUSIONS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The Draft EIR identified the following Project significant and unavoidable impacts beyond what was identified in the General Plan EIR:

- ▶ Impact 3.7-1: Project-generated GHG emissions and consistency with plans and regulations
- ▶ Impact 3.13-2: Result in an Exceedance of City of Elk Grove General Plan VMT Thresholds
- ▶ Impact 4-12: Contribute to Cumulative Greenhouse Gas Impacts
- ▶ Impact 4-22: Contribute to Cumulative Impacts on Vehicle Miles Traveled

1.6 CEQA PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

On January 5, 2024, the City released the Draft EIR for a 45-day public review and comment period. The Draft EIR was submitted to the State Clearinghouse for distribution to reviewing agencies; posted on the City's website (<https://www.elkgrovecity.org/zoo>); and was made available at the City's offices at 8401 Laguna Palms Way and the Elk Grove Library at 8900 Elk Grove Boulevard. A notice of availability (NOA) of the Draft EIR was published in local newspapers and distributed by the City to a project-specific mailing list.

A public meeting was held at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday February 6, 2024, to receive input from agencies and the public on the Draft EIR. The meeting was recorded, and four verbal comments were received. None of the verbal comments were related to the adequacy of the Draft EIR.

As a result of these notification efforts, written comments were received from five agencies and 35 individuals on the content of the Draft EIR. Chapter 2, "Responses to Comments," identifies these commenting parties, their respective comments, and responses to these comments. None of the comments received, or the responses provided, constitute "significant new information" by CEQA standards (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5).

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE FINAL EIR

This Final EIR is organized as follows:

Chapter 1, "Introduction," describes the purpose of the Final EIR, summarizes the New Zoo at Elk Grove Project and the major conclusions of the Draft EIR, provides an overview of the CEQA public review process, and describes the content of the Final EIR.

Chapter 2, "Responses to Comments," contains a list of all parties who submitted comments on the Draft EIR during the public review period, copies of the comment letters received, and responses to the comments.

Chapter 3, "Revisions to the Draft EIR," presents revisions to the Draft EIR text made in response to comments, or to amplify, clarify or make minor modifications or corrections. Changes in the text are signified by ~~strikeouts~~ where text is removed and by underline where text is added.

Chapter 4, "References," identifies the documents used as sources for the analysis.

Chapter 5, "List of Preparers," identifies the lead agency contacts as well as the preparers of this Final EIR.

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