

1 INTRODUCTION

This draft subsequent environmental impact report (Draft SEIR) evaluates the environmental impacts of the proposed City of Elk Grove General Plan Amendments and Update of Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Standards (General Plan Amendments and Update of VMT Standards, or Project). It has been prepared under the direction of the City of Elk Grove (City) in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15000 et seq.). This chapter of the Draft SEIR provides information on:

- ▶ the Project requiring environmental analysis (synopsis);
- ▶ the type, purpose, and intended uses of this Draft SEIR;
- ▶ the Project's relationship to the current City General Plan;
- ▶ the scope of this Draft SEIR;
- ▶ agency roles and responsibilities;
- ▶ the public review process;
- ▶ the organization of this Draft SEIR; and
- ▶ standard terminology.

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The City, acting as the lead agency, has prepared this Draft SEIR to provide the public and responsible and trustee agencies with information about the potential environmental effects of the proposed Project. As described in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15121(a), an EIR is a public informational document that assesses potential environmental effects of the proposed project and identifies mitigation measures and alternatives to the proposed project that could reduce or avoid its adverse environmental impacts. Public agencies are charged with the duty to consider and minimize environmental impacts of proposed land use plans and development where feasible and are obligated to balance a variety of public objectives, including economic, environmental, and social factors.

1.2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The following provides a brief summary and overview of the General Plan Amendments and Update of VMT Standards. Chapter 2, "Project Description," of this SEIR includes a detailed description of the Project, including maps and graphics.

The Project would:

- ▶ Amend the City's General Plan to establish the Livable Employment Area (LEA) Community Plan,
- ▶ Amend the City's General Plan to update vehicle miles traveled thresholds currently provided in the General Plan,
- ▶ Amend the General Plan designated land uses in the Old Town Elk Grove Policy Area and incorporate the Grant Line Road Precise Plan,
- ▶ Amend the City's General Plan Mitigation Measure MM 5.5.1a and MM 5.5.1b, and
- ▶ Amend the City's General Plan to update the South and West Study Area land uses.

1.3 TYPE, PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND INTENDED USES OF THIS DRAFT SEIR

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15162, an SEIR should be prepared if an EIR has been certified for a project, but one or more of the following conditions are met.

- (1) Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;
- (2) Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or Negative Declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or
- (3) New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified as complete or the Negative Declaration was adopted, shows any of the following:
 - A. The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR or negative declaration.
 - B. Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;
 - C. Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible, and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative; or
 - D. Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative.

The City certified the City of Elk Grove General Plan Update Final EIR (General Plan EIR) and adopted the General Plan in February 2019. This Project represents an update to the adopted General Plan. Because the Project proposes changes to the land uses evaluated in the General Plan EIR that could involve new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects, the City has determined that the preparation of a SEIR is the appropriate environmental review document for the project, pursuant to the requirements of State CEQA Guidelines Section 15162.

The General Plan, Draft EIR, and Final EIR are available for review through the City and online at the following location: <http://www.elkgrovecity.org/generalplan>.

An EIR is a public informational document used in the planning and decision-making process. An EIR assesses the environmental effects related to the planning, construction, and operation of a project and indicates ways to reduce or avoid significant environmental impacts. An EIR also discloses significant environmental impacts that cannot be avoided; any growth-inducing impacts of a project; effects found not to be significant; and significant cumulative impacts of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in combination with the impacts of the project.

Mitigation has been recommended to the extent feasible to reduce or avoid the project's significant impacts. Mitigation measures from the General Plan EIR that are adopted and apply to the Project are identified. Section 3.11, "Environmental Impact and Mitigation Addressed in Previous EIRs," also identifies impacts and adopted mitigation measures from EIRs for plan areas adopted prior to the 2019 General Plan Update (Southeast Policy Area Strategic Plan, Laguna Ridge Specific Plan, and Lent Ranch Marketplace Special Planning Area) that cover portions of the proposed LEA Community Plan Area. As an informational document for decision makers, a Draft SEIR is not intended to recommend either approval or denial of a project. CEQA requires the decision makers to balance the benefits of a project against its unavoidable environmental impacts. If environmental impacts are identified as significant and unavoidable (i.e., no feasible mitigation is available to reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level), the City may still approve the project if it believes that social, economic, or other benefits outweigh the unavoidable impacts. The City would then be required to make findings and state, in writing, the specific reasons for approving the project, based on information in the Draft SEIR and other information in the administrative record. In accordance with Section

15093 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the document containing such reasons is called a “statement of overriding considerations.”

The program-level analysis in this SEIR considers the broad environmental effects of the Project. This SEIR will be used to evaluate subsequent projects and activities under the Project. This SEIR is intended to provide the information and environmental analysis necessary to assist public agency decision-makers in considering approval of the Project. Additional environmental review under CEQA may be required for subsequent projects and would be generally based on the subsequent project’s consistency with the Project and the analysis in this SEIR, as required under CEQA. It may be determined that some future projects or activities under the Project may be exempt from further environmental review. When subsequent projects or activities under the Project are proposed, the City will examine the projects or activities to determine whether their effects were adequately analyzed in the General Plan EIR and this SEIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(c)). If the projects or activities would have no effects beyond those disclosed in this SEIR, no further CEQA compliance would be required.

1.4 RELATIONSHIP TO THE CITY OF ELK GROVE GENERAL PLAN

The City adopted its General Plan on February 27, 2019, pursuant to Government Code Section 65300. The General Plan acts as the official policy statement of the City and guides public and private development within the City in a manner that maximizes the social and economic benefits for all citizens. In addition, the General Plan also provides policy direction that guides land use development within the City, as well as provides protection for existing natural resources.

Previous environmental review for the General Plan was included in the *City of Elk Grove General Plan Update Draft and Final Environmental Impact Report* (General Plan EIR) (State Clearinghouse Number 2017062058). It should be noted that since adoption of the City’s General Plan in 2019 the General Plan has been amended six times, twice with SEIRs for the Housing and Safety Element Update and the Southeast Industrial Area Specific Plan. The General Plan EIR analyzed the General Plan based on the adopted General Plan land use designations. A Statement of Overriding Considerations was adopted for the impacts listed below that were identified as significant and unavoidable. The reader is referred to Section 3.11, “Environmental Impact and Mitigation Addressed in Previous EIRs,” for a discussion of significant and unavoidable impacts identified in EIRs for plan areas adopted prior to the 2019 General Plan Update that cover portions of the proposed LEA Community Plan Area.

1.4.1 Aesthetics, Lights, and Glare

- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan will encourage new development and redevelopment activities that could degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Planning Area.
- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan would create new sources of daytime glare and would change nighttime lighting and illumination levels associated with new and redevelopment activities in the Planning Area, which would contribute to skyglow.

1.4.2 Agricultural Resources

- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan would allow for new development in areas of the Planning Area that are designated Important Farmland and/or under Williamson Act contract.

1.4.3 Air Quality

- ▶ Buildout of the General Plan could result in short-term construction emissions that could violate or substantially contribute to a violation of federal and state standards for ozone, particulate matter (PM) PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5}.
- ▶ Buildout of the General Plan could result in long-term operational emissions that could violate or substantially contribute to a violation of federal and State standards for ozone and coarse and fine particulate matter.

- ▶ Buildout of the General Plan could result in increased exposure of existing or planned sensitive land uses to stationary or mobile-source toxic air contaminants that would exceed applicable health risk standards.
- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan would not result in increased exposure of sensitive receptors to odorous emissions as compared to baseline conditions.
- ▶ The General Plan would be substantially consistent with all applicable control measures in the Sacramento Regional National Ambient Air Quality Standards 8-Hour Ozone Attainment and Further Progress Plan (Attainment Plan), but because buildout of the General Plan would exceed the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District's (SMAQMD) air quality thresholds of significance, the General Plan would not be considered to be fully consistent with the Plan's goals.

1.4.4 Biological Resources

- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan could result in adverse effects, either directly or indirectly, on species listed as endangered, threatened, rare, proposed, and candidate plants and wildlife.
- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan could result in adverse effects, either directly or indirectly, on non-listed special status species (Species of Special Concern, fully protected, and locally important).

1.4.5 Hydrology and Water Quality

- ▶ Buildout of the General Plan would increase the demand on water supplies, some of which would be groundwater.

1.4.6 Noise

- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan would result in a significant increase in transportation noise, including traffic noise levels along many existing roadways in the City. Even with implementation of proposed policies to limit traffic noise impacts, predicted traffic noise levels would still result in potential increases above applicable standards.

1.4.7 Public Services and Recreation

- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan would allow for future development in the Planning Area, which would result in an increase of school-aged children and require the construction of new public-school facilities, the construction of which could have impacts on the physical environment.

1.4.8 Public Utilities

- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan would increase demand for domestic water supply, which may result in the need for additional water supplies.
- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan would require the construction of new and expanded water supply infrastructure, which could result in impacts to the physical environment.

1.4.9 Cumulative Aesthetics, Light, and Glare

- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan, in addition to other reasonably foreseeable projects in the region, would introduce new development into undeveloped agricultural and rural areas that would have a cumulatively considerable contribution to impacts on visual character.

- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan, in addition to other reasonably foreseeable projects in the region, would introduce new development into undeveloped agricultural and rural areas, increasing nighttime lighting and daytime glare and contributing to regional skyglow.

1.4.10 Cumulative Agricultural Resources

- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan would ultimately result in the conversion of Important Farmland and the cancellation of Williamson Act contracts. This loss would contribute to the cumulative loss of farmland in the region.

1.4.11 Cumulative Air Quality

- ▶ The air basin will exacerbate existing regional problems with criteria air pollutants and ozone precursors.

1.4.12 Cumulative Biological Resources

- ▶ Future development in the Planning Area, when considered together with other past, existing, and planned future projects, could result in a significant cumulative impact on biological resources in the region.

1.4.13 Cumulative Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Energy

- ▶ Adoption of the proposed General Plan and CAP Update would result in emission reductions that are consistent with statewide reduction targets for 2020 and 2030. However, based on current emission estimates for the City projected for 2050, and considering the proposed policies and programs included in the General Plan and Climate Action Plan (CAP) Update, the proposed General Plan and CAP Update would likely not result in sufficient GHG reductions for the City to meet the longer-term goal for 2050 as stated in EO S-3-05.

1.4.14 Cumulative Hydrology and Water Quality

- ▶ Development of the Planning Area, in combination with other development in the Central Basin, would increase demand for groundwater and could potentially interfere with recharge of the aquifer.

1.4.15 Cumulative Noise

- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan would contribute to cumulative noise levels along many roadway segments in the Planning Area due to increased cumulative traffic volumes.

1.4.16 Cumulative Public Services and Recreation

- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan, in combination with other development in the EGUSD service area, would result in the increase of school-aged children, which would require the construction of new public school facilities, which could have impacts on the environment.

1.4.17 Cumulative Public Utilities

- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan, in combination with other development, would contribute to cumulative demand for domestic water supply.
- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan, in addition to other development in the Regional San service area, would generate new wastewater flows requiring conveyance and treatment.

1.4.18 Cumulative Transportation

- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan could cause unacceptable level of service (LOS) conditions at some intersections and on some roadway segments.
- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan would exacerbate unacceptable (LOS F) conditions on State Route 99 and Interstate 5.
- ▶ Implementation of the General Plan would result in increased vehicle miles traveled.

1.5 SCOPE OF THIS DRAFT SEIR

This Draft SEIR analyzes the potentially significant environmental impacts resulting from Project implementation, including amendment to the adopted General Plan land use designations and growth projections. See Chapter 2, "Project Description," for a complete discussion of adopted and proposed land use designations and growth projects for the Project.

This Draft SEIR includes an evaluation of the following 10 environmental issue areas as well as other CEQA-mandated issues (e.g., cumulative impacts, growth-inducing impacts, significant unavoidable impacts, alternatives):

- ▶ Aesthetics,
- ▶ Air Quality,
- ▶ Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources,
- ▶ Energy,
- ▶ Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change,
- ▶ Noise and Vibration,
- ▶ Population and Housing,
- ▶ Public Services,
- ▶ Transportation, and
- ▶ Utilities and Service Systems.

This Draft SEIR also includes Section 3.11, "Environmental Impact and Mitigation Addressed in Previous EIRs," that evaluates additional environmental resource areas addressed in the General Plan EIR and in EIRs for plan areas adopted prior to the 2019 General Plan Update (Southeast Policy Area Strategic Plan, Laguna Ridge Specific Plan, and Lent Ranch Marketplace Special Planning Area) that cover the proposed LEA Community Plan Area. Project impacts for these environmental resource areas were determined not to be more severe than the impacts or new impacts identified in the General Plan Update EIR and the applicable EIRs identified above. In cases where there are multiple adopted mitigation measures from different EIRs that address the same impact topic, a new/consolidated mitigation measure is identified to be applied only to the LEA Community Plan Area to avoid conflicts from implementation of adopted mitigation monitoring programs.

Under the CEQA statutes and the State CEQA Guidelines, a lead agency may limit an EIR's discussion of environmental effects when such effects are not considered potentially significant (PRC Section 21002.1[e]; State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15128, 15143). Information used to determine which impacts would be potentially significant was derived from review of the Project; review of applicable planning documents and CEQA documentation; field work; feedback from public and agency consultation; and comments received on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) (see Appendix A of this Draft SEIR).

The NOP was distributed on February 18, 2022, to responsible agencies, interested parties, and organizations, as well as private organizations and individuals that may have an interest in the Project. The purpose of the NOP and the scoping meeting was to provide notification that an EIR for the Project was being prepared and to solicit input on the scope and

content of the environmental document. Traditionally, the City hosts one scoping meeting for the general public during the NOP comment period. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related State and local health orders limiting in-person public meetings, the City provided a video presentation during the NOP comment period (February 18 to March 21). The video presentation introduced the Project, outlined the CEQA process, and provided a method for directly submitting comments on the scope of the EIR. Comments were also received in writing via postal service.

As a result of the review of existing information and the scoping process, it was determined that each of the issue areas listed above should be evaluated fully in this Draft SEIR. Further information on the NOP and scoping process is provided below in Section 1.7, "Public Review Process."

1.6 AGENCY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.6.1 Lead Agency

The City is the lead agency responsible for approving the Project and for ensuring that the requirements of CEQA have been met. After the SEIR public review process is complete, the City Council will determine whether to certify the SEIR (see State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15090) and approve the Project.

1.6.2 Trustee and Responsible Agencies

A trustee agency is a State agency that has jurisdiction by law over natural resources that are held in trust for the people of the State of California. The only trustee agency that has jurisdiction over resources potentially affected by the Project is the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

Responsible agencies are public agencies, other than the lead agency, that have discretionary-approval responsibility for reviewing, carrying out, or approving elements of a project. Responsible agencies should participate in the lead agency's CEQA process, review the lead agency's CEQA document, and use the document when making a decision on project elements.

There are no agencies other than the City that have approval or permitting authority for the Project. However, implementation of the proposed Project could involve many responsible agencies, depending on the details of a future project. The following are some of the agencies that could be required to act as responsible agencies for subsequent projects under the General Plan Amendments and Update of VMT Standards:

- ▶ CDFW,
- ▶ Elk Grove Water District,
- ▶ Omochumne-Hartnell Water District,
- ▶ Sacramento Area Sewer District (SacSewer) and Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District (Regional San),
- ▶ Sacramento County Water Agency (SCWA),
- ▶ Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (SMAQMD), and
- ▶ Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD).

1.7 PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

As identified above in Section 1.5, "Scope of this Draft SEIR," in accordance with CEQA regulations, an NOP was distributed on February 18, 2022, to responsible agencies, interested parties and organizations, and private organizations and individuals that could have interest in the Project.

The purpose of the NOP was to provide notification that an EIR for the Project was being prepared and to solicit input on the scope and content of the document. The NOP and responses to the NOP are included in Appendix A of this Draft SEIR.

This Draft SEIR is being circulated for public review and comment for a period of 45 days. During this period, comments from the general public as well as organizations and agencies on environmental issues may be submitted to the lead agency.

Upon completion of the public review and comment period, a Final SEIR will be prepared that will include both written and oral comments on the Draft SEIR received during the public-review period, responses to those comments, and any revisions to the Draft SEIR made in response to public comments. The Draft SEIR and Final SEIR will comprise the SEIR for the Project.

Before adopting the Project, the lead agency is required to certify that the SEIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, that the decision-making body reviewed and considered the information in the SEIR, and that the SEIR reflects the independent judgment of the lead agency.

1.8 DRAFT SEIR ORGANIZATION

This Draft SEIR is organized into chapters, as identified and briefly described below. Chapters are further divided into sections (e.g., Chapter 3, “Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures” and Section 3.5, “Energy”):

- ▶ The “Executive Summary”: This chapter introduces the Project; provides a summary of the environmental review process, effects found not to be significant, and key environmental issues; and lists significant impacts and mitigation measures to reduce significant impacts to less-than-significant levels.
- ▶ Chapter 1, “Introduction”: This chapter provides a description of the lead and responsible agencies, the legal authority and purpose for the document, and the public review process.
- ▶ Chapter 2, “Project Description”: This chapter describes the location, background, and goals and objectives for the Project, and describes the project elements in detail.
- ▶ Chapter 3, “Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures”: The sections within this chapter evaluate the expected environmental impacts generated by the Project, arranged by subject area (e.g., Aesthetics, Hydrology and Water Quality). Within each subsection of Chapter 3, the regulatory background, existing conditions, analysis methodology, and thresholds of significance are described. The anticipated changes to the existing conditions after development of the project are then evaluated for each subject area. For any significant or potentially significant impact that would result from project implementation, mitigation measures are presented and the level of impact significance after mitigation is identified. Environmental impacts are numbered sequentially within each section (e.g., Impact 3.2-1, Impact 3.2-2, Impact 3.2-3 and so forth and so on). Any required mitigation measures are numbered to correspond to the impact numbering; therefore, the mitigation measure for Impact 3.2-2 would be Mitigation Measure 3.2-2.
- ▶ Chapter 4, “Cumulative Impacts”: This chapter provides information required by CEQA regarding cumulative impacts that would result from implementation of the Project together with other past, present, and probable future projects.
- ▶ Chapter 5, “Alternatives”: This chapter evaluates alternatives to the Project, including alternatives considered but eliminated from further consideration, the No Project Alternative, and two alternative development options. The environmentally superior alternative is identified.
- ▶ Chapter 6, “Other CEQA Sections”: This chapter evaluates growth-inducing impacts and irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources and discloses any significant and unavoidable adverse impacts.
- ▶ Chapter 7, “Report Preparers”: This chapter identifies the preparers of the document.
- ▶ Chapter 8, “References”: This chapter identifies the organizations and persons consulted during preparation of this Draft SEIR and the documents and individuals used as sources for the analysis.

1.9 STANDARD TERMINOLOGY

This Draft SEIR uses the following standard terminology:

- ▶ “No impact” means no change from existing conditions (no mitigation is needed).
- ▶ “Less-than-significant impact” means no substantial adverse change in the physical environment (no mitigation is needed).
- ▶ “Potentially significant impact” means an impact that might cause a substantial adverse change in the environment (mitigation is recommended because potentially significant impacts are treated as significant).
- ▶ “Significant impact” means an impact that would cause a substantial adverse change in the physical environment (mitigation is recommended).
- ▶ “Significant and unavoidable impact” means an impact that would cause a substantial adverse change in the physical environment and that cannot be avoided, even with the implementation of all feasible mitigation.

This page intentionally left blank.