

4 ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

This chapter consists of 15 sections that evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposed City of Vacaville General Plan. The conclusions of the analysis contained in this chapter are summarized in Chapter 2, Report Summary. In accordance with Appendix G of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the potential environmental effects of the proposed General Plan are analyzed for the following environmental issue areas:

- ◆ Aesthetics
- ◆ Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- ◆ Air Quality
- ◆ Biological Resources
- ◆ Cultural Resources
- ◆ Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- ◆ Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- ◆ Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- ◆ Hydrology and Water Quality
- ◆ Land Use and Planning
- ◆ Noise
- ◆ Population and Housing
- ◆ Public Services and Recreation
- ◆ Traffic and Transportation
- ◆ Utilities and Service Systems

A. Format of the Environmental Evaluation

Each section in Chapter 4, Environmental Evaluation, generally follows a consistent format, including the following subsections:

- ◆ The Regulatory Framework subsection contains an overview of the federal, State, and local laws and regulations applicable to each environmental review topic.
- ◆ The Existing Conditions subsection describes current physical conditions with regard to the environmental factor reviewed.
- ◆ The Standards of Significance subsection tells how an impact is judged to be significant in this EIR. These standards are based on the CEQA Guidelines and other regulatory criteria where noted.

- ◆ The Impact Discussion gives an overview of potential impacts of the proposed General Plan and Energy and Conservation Action Strategy (ECAS) and tells why impacts were found to be significant or less than significant. This section also includes a discussion of cumulative impacts of the proposed project in combination with other projected development in the area around Vacaville. In addition, this section lists significant impacts and suggested mitigation measures that would mitigate each impact, where such measures are available.

In Sections 4.1 through 4.15, each numbered impact is considered significant prior to mitigation. Mitigation measures have been suggested that would reduce significant impacts to a *less-than-significant* level. Following an identified mitigation measure, there is a statement explaining whether the mitigation would reduce the impact to *less than significant*, or whether it would remain *significant and unavoidable*.

B. Cumulative Impact Analysis

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines requires an EIR to discuss cumulative impacts of a project when the project's incremental effect is cumulatively considerable. A cumulative impact is created as a result of the combination of the project evaluated in the EIR together with other reasonably foreseeable projects causing related impacts. The cumulative impacts analyses in Sections 4.1 to 4.15 are included in the Impact Discussion in each section.

In the case of an area-wide planning document such as a General Plan, cumulative effects occur from development under the General Plan within the city combined with effects of development on lands around the city and in the region. Since all development in Vacaville would be approved under the proposed General Plan, no development within the EIR Study Area would be considered part of the cumulative impacts; instead, development inside the EIR Study Area is part of the project itself.

Where the incremental effect of a project is not “cumulatively considerable,” a lead agency need not consider that effect significant, but must briefly describe its basis for concluding that the incremental effect is not cumulatively considerable.

1. Geographic Area for Cumulative Analysis

Cumulative impacts may occur over different geographic areas. The cumulative discussions in Sections 4.1 through 4.15 explain the geographic scope of the area affected by each cumulative effect. In most sections, the cumulative impacts of the proposed General Plan and ECAS take into account growth projected by the General Plan for the Vacaville area, in combination with impacts from projected growth in the rest of Solano County.

However, the geographic area considered for each cumulative impact depends upon the impact that is being analyzed. For example, in assessing air quality impacts, all development within the air basin contributes to regional emissions of criteria pollutants, and basin-wide projections of emissions are the best tool for determining the cumulative effect. The geographic area considered in the cumulative analysis is described in each cumulative impact analysis discussion.

2. Cumulative Projects Considered

In each of the following 15 sections, the cumulative impacts of the proposed General Plan and ECAS take into account growth and development projected by the proposed General Plan for the EIR Study Area, in combination with impacts from projected growth in the rest of Solano County. Therefore, the geographic scope covered by the cumulative analysis is a larger area than the geographic scope of the proposed project. The cumulative impact analyses take into account general plan information for Solano County and the cities located in Solano County, including Benicia, Dixon, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun City, and Vallejo.

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