

# 1 INTRODUCTION

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared to provide an assessment of the potential environmental consequences of adopting and implementing the proposed City of Vacaville General Plan Update (General Plan) and Energy and Conservation Action Strategy (ECAS). The Draft EIR has been completed in accordance with, and in fulfillment of, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements. CEQA requires that State and local public agencies analyze projects to determine potential impacts on the environment and disclose any such impacts.<sup>1</sup> Typically, for larger projects, this analysis takes the form of an EIR. CEQA stipulates that an EIR must not only analyze a project's potential environmental effects, but also attempt to address those effects either through feasible mitigation measures or alternatives to the project.

This EIR will inform City of Vacaville decision-makers, other agencies, and the general public of the nature of the General Plan and its potential effects on the environment. When appropriate, this Draft EIR identifies mitigation measures that, if effectively implemented, would reduce or avoid potentially significant impacts. It also examines alternatives to the proposed General Plan and ECAS that could reduce or avoid the identified significant impacts. The City of Vacaville is the lead agency on the project and the EIR.<sup>2</sup>

## *A. Proposed Action*

The proposed action analyzed by this Draft EIR is the implementation of the proposed General Plan and ECAS. The proposed General Plan would replace the existing General Plan, which was adopted comprehensively in 1990 and amended through 2013. The General Plan is the principal policy document that guides future conservation and development in Vacaville. The proposed General Plan not only provides concepts for long-term planning through 2035, it also provides overall direction to the day-to-day actions of the City, its elected officials, and staff. The proposed General Plan is described in detail in Chapter 3, Project Description, of this Draft EIR.

The proposed General Plan includes regulations in the form of goals, policies, and actions that are intended to achieve the community's vision for Vacaville. The policies and actions are to be

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<sup>1</sup> CEQA Guidelines, Section 15002(a).

<sup>2</sup> A lead agency has the principal responsibility for either carrying out or issuing permits to a project. As such, the lead agency is the party responsible for ensuring that environmental analyses are conducted when necessary and that such environmental review is done in accordance with CEQA. CEQA Guidelines, Section 15367.

used by the City to guide everyday decision-making and to ensure progress toward the attainment of the goals outlined in the plan.

The proposed ECAS outlines strategies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Vacaville. The ECAS was developed concurrent with the proposed General Plan as a key tool to implement the General Plan. The ECAS addresses the major sources of GHG emissions in Vacaville and sets forth a detailed and long-term strategy that the City and community can implement to achieve the GHG emissions reduction target and achieve greater sustainability in transportation and land use, energy, water, solid waste, and open space. Implementation of the ECAS will support ambitious emission reduction targets adopted by the State of California. The ECAS will also be utilized for tiering and streamlining of future development within Vacaville, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Sections 15152 and 15183.5. The ECAS will serve as the CEQA threshold of significance within the city for climate change, by which all applicable developments within the city will be reviewed.

### ***B. EIR Scope, Issues, and Concerns***

This Draft EIR is a Program EIR that analyzes the proposed adoption and implementation of the proposed General Plan and ECAS. As described in the CEQA Guidelines, a number of types of EIRs exist. Different types of EIRs are used for varying situations and intended uses. As described in Section 15161 of the CEQA Guidelines, the most common type of EIR is a *project* EIR, which examines the environmental impacts of a specific development project. As described in Section 15168 of the CEQA Guidelines, *program* EIRs are appropriate when a project consists of a series of actions related to the issuance of rules, regulations, and other planning criteria.

In this case, the project that is the subject of this EIR consists of long-term plans that will be implemented over time as policy documents guiding future development activities and City actions. No specific development projects are proposed as part of the project. Therefore, this EIR is a program-level EIR. Because this is a Program EIR, it does not evaluate the impacts of specific, individual developments that may be allowed under the proposed General Plan. Each specific future project will require separate environmental review, as required by CEQA, to secure the necessary discretionary development permits. Therefore, while subsequent environmental review may be tiered off this EIR, this EIR is not intended to address impacts of individual projects.

The scope of this Draft EIR was established by the City of Vacaville through the General Plan process. Issues addressed in this EIR include:

- ◆ 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

### *C. Planning Process*

#### **1. Notice of Preparation**

Because it was anticipated that the project may cause potentially significant impacts on the environment, this EIR was prepared without an initial study.<sup>3</sup> A Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR was published on February 10, 2011 and is contained in Appendix A of this Draft EIR. The NOP announced the date and venue for the public scoping meeting.<sup>4</sup> The NOP described the environmental issues to be covered in the EIR and invited comments on the proposed EIR scope. The NOP was sent to the State Clearinghouse, as required under CEQA, and to 14 reviewing agencies. The City also sent the NOP to other interested parties, including government agencies with a responsibility or interest over the General Plan, non-governmental agencies (NGOs), elected officials, utility owners, and property owners and residents adjacent to properties where General Plan land use designations are proposed to change.

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<sup>3</sup> An initial study is a preliminary analysis of a project's potential environmental effects.

<sup>4</sup> A public scoping meeting allows the lead agency to directly consult with anyone it believes will be concerned with a project's environmental effects. It gathers the lead agency, other agencies, and the public together to discuss which issues need to be covered in the EIR, what kinds of alternatives or mitigation measures might be useful, and which topics do not require analysis. CEQA Guidelines, Section 15083.

## **2. Public Scoping Meeting**

A public scoping meeting to describe the EIR process and to solicit comments on issues that should be covered in the EIR was held at City Hall on March 10, 2011. A summary of the comments received at the public scoping meeting is contained in Appendix A of this Draft EIR.

## **3. Comments Received**

Comments were received verbally at the scoping meeting. Written comments were also received during the 30-day (February 11 to March 17, 2011) comment period following publication of the NOP. The comments received on the NOP are contained in Appendix A of this Draft EIR.

Together these verbal and written comments constitute the City of Vacaville's scoping process which helped to identify areas of focus for this EIR. Through the scoping process, the following environmental issue areas were found to involve potentially significant impacts and are addressed in this EIR:

- ◆ Impacts related to air pollution; wildlife; Native American traditional places or sacred lands; hazards, including flooding; GHG emissions; consistency with the Solano County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans, including building and antenna height limits; noise and safety generated by railroad and airplane traffic; irrigation district facilities; and the regional transportation system, State Highway System, and alternative transit infrastructure.
- ◆ Strategies to increase renewable energy generation within city boundaries.
- ◆ Strategies to increase public and alternative transportation usage through transit oriented development and alternatively-fueled vehicle infrastructure.

## **4. Draft EIR Availability**

As required by State Law, this Draft EIR will be available for review by the public and interested parties, agencies, and organizations for a 55-day period. A copy of this Draft EIR has been sent to the State Clearinghouse and a notice of availability of this Draft EIR has been sent to those who requested to be notified by responding to the NOP. It is also available for downloading from the General Plan Update website at [www.vacavillegeneralplan.org](http://www.vacavillegeneralplan.org). Copies are also available at the following locations:

- ◆ City Hall – Community Development Department  
650 Merchant Street, Vacaville, CA 95688
- ◆ Vacaville Public Library – Cultural Center  
1020 Ulatis Drive, Vacaville, CA 95687
- ◆ Vacaville Public Library – Town Square  
1 Town Square Place, Vacaville, CA 95688

## 5. Draft EIR Comments

This Draft EIR was published on October 25, 2013, which marks the start of a 55-day comment period as required under CEQA. Written comments should be received no later than 5 p.m. on December 18, 2013 (postmarks will not be accepted) and should be sent to:

Tyra Hays, Senior Planner/General Plan Update Project Manager  
City of Vacaville  
Community Development Department  
650 Merchant Street  
Vacaville, CA 95688  
Phone: (707) 449-5366  
Email: GeneralPlanUpdate@CityofVacaville.com

Verbal comments may also be made at the Public Hearing (see below).

Comments should focus on the environmental impacts and the adequacy of the EIR. Section 15151 of the State *CEQA Guidelines* defines the standards for EIR adequacy as follows:

*An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in the light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR would summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The courts have looked not for perfection; but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure.*

## 6. Public Hearing

A Public Hearing on the Draft EIR where additional comments will be received will be held at the following Planning Commission meeting:

December 17, 2013 at 7:00 pm  
Vacaville City Hall – City Council Chambers  
650 Merchant Street, Vacaville, CA 95688

## 7. Final EIR and Responses to Comments

All comments received within the comment period and pertaining to the environmental impacts and adequacy of the Draft EIR will be responded to in writing and included in the Final EIR. Comments on the project merits, or unsubstantiated comments, do not require a response. Responses, together with comment letters, emails, and a hearing transcript summary, will be included in the Final EIR, along with any necessary revisions to the contents of the Draft EIR.

The Final EIR will be available for public review prior to consideration of its certification by the City of Vacaville City Council.

## **8. Final EIR Approval and Project Approval**

When the City Council considers the Final EIR, it will also consider the proposed General Plan and ECAS, which may be approved or modified. If the General Plan and ECAS are approved as proposed, the City Council will adopt the mitigation measures specified in this EIR as conditions for approval. Alternatively, it could require other mitigation measures deemed to be effective mitigations for the identified impacts, or it could find that the mitigation measures cannot be feasibly implemented. For any identified significant impacts for which no mitigation measure is feasible, the City Council will be required to adopt a finding that the impacts are considered acceptable because specific overriding considerations indicate that the project's benefits outweigh the impacts in question. The City Council may also modify the proposed General Plan and ECAS to lessen the environmental impact.

### ***D. Report Organization***

This report is organized into the following chapters:

- ◆ **Chapter 1 – Introduction:** provides an introduction and overview of the document.
- ◆ **Chapter 2 – Report Summary:** provides a synopsis of the environmental impacts from the proposed project, describes recommended mitigation measures, and indicates the level of significance of impacts before and after mitigation.
- ◆ **Chapter 3 – Project Description:** describes the proposed project in detail, including the project location, surrounding uses, project characteristics, and required permits and approvals.
- ◆ **Chapter 4 – Environmental Evaluation:** provides an analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed General Plan and ECAS and presents recommended mitigation measures to reduce their significance, as necessary.
- ◆ **Chapter 5 – Alternatives to the Proposed Project:** considers three alternatives to the proposed project, including the CEQA-required “No Project Alternative.”
- ◆ **Chapter 6 – CEQA-Required Assessment Conclusions:** briefly explains the relationship of the project to other environmental issues included under CEQA’s purview.
- ◆ **Chapter 7 – Report Preparation:** identifies the preparers of the Draft EIR.