

CHAPTER 2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) examines the potentially significant effects on the environment resulting from the proposed Mitchell Farms Subdivision (project). The proposed project would consist of the following components:

- 110 paseo units (alley-loaded single-family units)
- 72 patio units (groups of 2 to 8 single-family units accessed from a central alley)
- 78 traditional housing units (single-family units with garages facing the front of the lot); and
- 23 acres of recreational areas and open space

2.2 PURPOSE AND INTENDED USE OF THIS EIR

The City of Citrus Heights (City) prepared this Draft EIR in compliance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and the CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) 15000 et seq.). As provided under CEQA, an EIR is a tool for disclosing to the general public, the local community, responsible agencies, trustee agencies, other interested public agencies, and the City’s decision-making bodies (Planning Commission and City Council) the potential significant environmental effects (“impacts”) resulting from implementation of a project, as well as possible measures to mitigate those significant impacts and alternatives to the proposed project that could avoid significant impacts. In a practical sense, an EIR functions as a method of fact-finding, allowing the lead agency, the public, and other public agencies an opportunity to review and evaluate baseline conditions and project impacts. Accordingly, this Draft EIR provides the primary source of environmental information for the City and other public agencies to consider when exercising any permitting authority or approval power directly related to implementation of this project.

2.3 TYPE OF EIR

This Draft EIR provides a project-level analysis for the proposed project that focuses primarily on the changes in the environment that would result from construction and operation of the project (14 CCR 15168). The level of detail contained in this EIR is consistent with Section 15151 of the CEQA Guidelines, which states the following:

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 the 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 should 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.

2.4 LEAD, RESPONSIBLE, AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

The City is the lead agency for the project because it holds principal responsibility for approving the project. As required by CEQA, a list of the responsible and trustee agencies is provided in Section 3.5, Discretionary Actions and Use of this EIR. A responsible agency is a public agency other than the lead agency that has discretionary approval over a project. A trustee agency is defined as a state agency that has jurisdiction by law over natural resources that are held in trust for the people of the state.

2.5 SCOPE OF THE EIR

2.5.1 Potential Resource Effects Evaluated in this EIR

The scope of this EIR includes analysis of environmental issues identified as potentially significant in the Notice of Preparation (NOP) and environmental impact concerns identified in public comments submitted in response to the NOP (see Appendix A for the NOP and comment letters in response to the NOP). All of the following environmental resource areas are evaluated in this EIR:

- Land Use and Planning
- Population and Housing
- Biological Resources
- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Transportation
- Noise
- Air Quality
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Public Services and Utilities (including recreational facilities)
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Tribal Cultural Resources

This EIR evaluates direct impacts, reasonably foreseeable indirect impacts, and cumulative impacts resulting from planning, construction, and operation of the proposed project using the most current information available and in accordance with the provisions set forth in the CEQA Guidelines. In addition, this EIR recommends potentially feasible mitigation measures, where possible and appropriate, and project alternatives that would reduce or eliminate significant adverse environmental effects.

2.5.2 Resource Effects Focused Out of this EIR

As documented in the NOP, the project is expected to have no impact or a less-than-significant impact in several resource areas. Accordingly, this EIR does not include detailed analysis on those areas, as discussed in the following paragraphs.

The project site has been largely developed as a golf course; does not contain substantial timber resources; and is not used as, or zoned for, agricultural uses. The project site is not subject to a Williamson Act contract, nor is it listed in the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program database as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Farmland of Local Importance. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in any impacts to agricultural or forestry resources, and these resource areas are not analyzed in this EIR.

In September 2016, ECORP completed a Cultural Resources Inventory Report for the proposed project (ECORP Consulting 2016). No cultural resources were identified at the project site, as determined by a records search and field survey. Thus, no impacts to cultural resources are anticipated to occur with development of the proposed project, and such impacts are not evaluated in this EIR. However, it is possible that ground-disturbing activities will expose previously unrecorded cultural resources, and state law prescribes protective measures that must be taken in the event that any subsurface cultural items or human remains are discovered. Compliance with state and federal law would ensure that no adverse impacts would occur to cultural resources that may be discovered on site.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Web Soil Survey, the project site has soils from the Fiddymt–Orangevale Complex (2%–8% slopes) and the Urban Land–Xerarents–Fiddymt Complex (0%–8 % slopes) (USDA 2016). The former has a slight to moderate erosion hazard and a moderate shrink/swell potential, and the latter has a slight erosion hazard and a moderate shrink/swell potential. Because these soils may expand when wet and contract when dry, foundation structures may experience cracking. The City Building Code (municipal code chapter 18, Article IV) and Land Grading and Erosion Control (municipal code chapter 18, Article XII) allow for the City’s General Services Department Director to require preparation of a geotechnical report prior to issuance of grading and/or building permits. Standard engineering practices or site-specific recommendations provided in a geotechnical report that may be prepared for the proposed project would be used to

engineer soil stability to prevent foundation cracking. This engineering may require excavation of the expansive soils and replacement with non-expansive materials, treatment of expansive soils by mixing them with lime, or other methods that would ensure that the risk of foundation cracking is alleviated. Therefore, compliance with the City Building Code would ensure that these potential impacts would be less than significant and no further analysis of these impacts is necessary.

The project site is relatively flat, and, therefore, is subject to limited erosion and does not carry a landslide risk. Although the project site is located in the Central Valley, which is considered seismically active, Citrus Heights itself is not known to have active faults; any seismic vibrations in the region tends to come from active faults in the surrounding region (City of Citrus Heights 2010). The proposed project would be built in compliance with the California Building Code, which would ensure that the buildings constructed would be able to withstand seismic activity. During construction, the proposed project would be required to comply with the City's Grading Ordinance and other applicable regulations, and to demonstrate the effectiveness of any best management practices for ensuring that geologic and soil impacts would remain less than significant. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in any impacts to geology and soils, and this topic is not analyzed in this EIR.

The project site does not support mineral recovery activities and is not known to contain substantial mineral resources. Furthermore, development of the project site would not destroy any existing, and yet unknown, mineral resources. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in any impacts to mineral resources, and this topic is not analyzed in this EIR.

2.5.3 Alternatives

The alternatives chapter of this EIR (Chapter 5, Project Alternatives) was prepared in accordance with Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines. The alternatives analyzed in this EIR, in addition to the proposed project, are as follows:

Alternative 1: No Project/No Build Alternative. This alternative assumes that no development would occur, and the site would remain unchanged from its current condition.

Alternative 2: Existing Designations Alternative. This alternative assumes that the project site would be developed under the existing General Plan and zoning designations. The site would include approximately 135 apartments on the 6.26 acres designated for high-density residential development, 15.77 acres of commercial land uses, and continued operation of the existing golf course.

Alternative 3: Reduced Footprint Alternative. This alternative assumes that the project design would be modified to allow for greater retention of existing trees within the site, reduce the extent of new impervious surfaces that would be created on site, and create larger buffers between adjacent residences and the proposed site improvements.

2.6 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

This EIR was prepared to meet all of the substantive and procedural requirements of CEQA. As the lead agency, the City has the primary responsibility to conduct the environmental review and to approve or deny the proposed project. The City may rely upon this EIR in its consideration of granting the requested entitlements; making findings regarding identified impacts; and, if necessary, adopting a statement of overriding considerations regarding these impacts.

2.6.1 Notice of Preparation

To initiate the EIR process, the City circulated an NOP to solicit agency and public comments on the scope of the environmental analysis to be included in the EIR. The public review period for the NOP began on June 30, 2017, and comments were received through July 31, 2017. The NOP was submitted to the County Clerk and the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research State Clearinghouse, and posted on the City’s website for a 30-day public review period.

A public scoping session was held by the City on July 25, 2017. The purposes of this scoping session were to provide the public and governmental agencies with information on the proposed project and the CEQA process, and to give attendees an opportunity to identify environmental issues that should be considered in the EIR. No verbal comments were received from attendees at this meeting. Attendees were also invited to mail or email their comment letters to the City during the NOP public review period. The City received six comment letters, which included comments from the Native American Heritage Commission, Regional Water Quality Control Board, Sacramento Area Sewer District, Sacramento County Department of Transportation, and Sacramento Municipal Utility District (two letters submitted).

2.6.2 Draft EIR

The Draft EIR is subject to a 45-day public review period. In accordance with Section 15087 of the CEQA Guidelines, the City published a Notice of Availability of the Draft EIR at the same time it submitted a Notice of Completion and copies of the Draft EIR to the State Clearinghouse to initiate the public review period. Comments on the adequacy of the Draft EIR and the City’s compliance with CEQA may be submitted in writing to the City, as lead agency, prior to the end of the public review period for the Draft EIR. During the public review period, the City’s Planning Commission will hold a public workshop to receive public comments on the Draft EIR.

2.6.3 Final EIR

Following the close of the public review period for the Draft EIR, the City will prepare a Final EIR, which will include written responses to all comments received during the Draft EIR public review period. The Final EIR will consist of the Draft EIR (showing any changes in ~~strikeout~~/underline),

comments received during the public review period, and responses to those comments. The Final EIR must be certified before it can be used as the basis for decision making.

2.6.4 Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Section 15091, no public agency can approve or carry out a project for which a certified EIR identifies one or more significant effects unless the public agency makes one or more of the following findings, which must be supported by substantial evidence in the record:

- Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the Final EIR.
- Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and not the agency making the finding. Such changes have been adopted by such other agency or can and should be adopted by such other agency.
- Specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations make the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in the Final EIR unfeasible.

CEQA requires that the City Council first certify the Final EIR before considering whether to approve the proposed project or to make the required findings to approve the proposed project if the EIR finds that the project would result in a significant environmental impact.

2.6.5 Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

Pursuant to Section 15097 of the CEQA Guidelines, if the City Council approves the proposed project, the City must adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) that encompasses each of the mitigation measures presented in this EIR. The purpose of the MMRP is to ensure compliance with required mitigation during implementation of the project. An MMRP defines the requirements for monitoring and reporting on implementation of revisions to the project or compliance with conditions of approval that the lead agency has required as mitigation measures to lessen or avoid significant environmental effects. The MMRP will be prepared concurrently with the Final EIR.

2.7 DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

This EIR was designed for easy use and reference. Following is a brief summary of the contents of each chapter of this EIR:

- **Executive Summary (Chapter 1)** – Includes a summary of impacts and mitigation measures proposed by the project in a table format.

- **Introduction (Chapter 2)** – Provides a brief description of the proposed project; a description of this EIR, including its purpose, intended use, type, scope, and standards for adequacy; identification of lead, responsible, and trustee agencies; a description of the environmental review process; and a summary of how the document is organized.
- **Project Description (Chapter 3)** – Includes a discussion of the project site; a statement of project objectives; a general description of the project site’s environmental characteristics, including proposed plans for development; and required agency approvals.
- **Environmental Analysis (Chapter 4)** – Includes a topic-by-topic analysis of baseline environmental conditions without the project and impacts that would or could result from development of the project. It also identifies potentially feasible mitigation measures that, if adopted, would reduce the level of significance of environmental impacts. The results of field visits and data collection, and the findings of technical reports are included in the analysis.
- **Project Alternatives (Chapter 5)** – Includes an assessment of alternative methods for accomplishing most of the basic objectives of the proposed project while avoiding or substantially lessening at least one significant impact of the project. This assessment provides information for decision makers to make a reasoned choice among potentially feasible alternatives based on comparing the impacts of the alternatives to the impacts of the proposed project.
- **Other CEQA Considerations (Chapter 6)** – Includes a discussion of additional issues required by CEQA, including significant unavoidable adverse impacts, irreversible environmental changes, growth inducement, and energy consumption. The analysis of cumulative impacts is included in the technical analysis contained in Chapter 4.
- **EIR Preparers (Chapter 7)** – Lists the organizations and individuals involved in the preparation of the EIR.
- **Appendices** – Contains reference items and reports providing support and documentation of the analysis performed in the EIR.

2.8 REFERENCES

City of Citrus Heights. 2010. *Citrus Heights General Plan Background Report*, Chapter 10, Safety. June 17, 2010. <http://www.citrusheights.net/DocumentCenter/View/308>.

ECORP Consulting. 2016. CONFIDENTIAL Cultural Resources Inventory Report, Mitchell Farms, Sacramento County. Prepared for Watt Communities by ECORP Consulting. September 2016.

USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture). 2016. Web Soil Survey. Accessed August 18, 2017. <https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>.

INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK