

PREFACE

ABOUT THIS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is an informational report that supports the City of Citrus Heights' (City) planning and decision-making process. An EIR describes the potential environmental effects of a "project," in this case the Draft General Plan and the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan (GGRP). It outlines ways to reduce or avoid environmental effects, including by recommending alternatives to the project. The purpose of an EIR is not to recommend approving or denying a project, but it can enable decision-makers to balance the benefits of a project against its unavoidable effects when considering whether to approve or deny the project.

REPORT PREPARATION AND LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

This EIR was prepared to comply with legal requirements set by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, the State CEQA Guidelines, and case law. It includes all of the elements required by CEQA for a "Program EIR". A benefit of preparing a Program EIR for the Draft General Plan and GGRP is that EIRs prepared for later projects which are consistent with the plans can focus on environmental effects which may be reduced, mitigated, or avoided that are specific or peculiar to each later project.

Environmental consultants prepared the EIR under the direction of City staff, and a draft was available for public review for 45 days, as required by CEQA. The EIR includes comments and responses to comments from agencies and the public received during the comment period. Changes to the EIR responding to comments on the draft are indicated by ~~strikeout~~ and underline text, as illustrated in this sentence. The City Council must certify the final EIR as complete and adequate before adopting the Draft General Plan and GGRP.

ISSUES CONSIDERED IN THE REPORT

The EIR considers a range of environmental resource topics required by CEQA. For the Draft General Plan and GGRP, topics of greatest concern included transportation and mobility, air quality, and greenhouse gas emissions. For each topic, the EIR identifies potential environmental impacts of adopting and implementing the plans, classifying each impact in one of three ways:

- ▶ "less-than-significant impact" – adopting and implementing the plans could result in a minor, but acceptable adverse effect in the physical environment.
- ▶ "significant impact" – adopting and implementing the plans could have a substantial adverse effect on the physical environment, but that effect could be reduced to a minor, but acceptable level if the plans are either modified, or supplemented with additional requirements for specific projects. These are referred to throughout the EIR as "mitigation measures".
- ▶ "significant and unavoidable impact" – adopting and implementing the plans could cause a substantial adverse effect on the environment, and no known modifications or supplements to the plans are available to reduce the effect to a minor, but acceptable level.

SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS THAT CAN BE MITIGATED OR AVOIDED

The EIR identifies the following “significant” impacts and corresponding mitigation measures:

Impact	Before Mitigation	Mitigation	After Mitigation
Air Quality Short-term Construction	Significant	Compliance with certain Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District measures	Less than significant
Noise Increase in Short-term Vibration Levels	Significant	Project applicants shall prepare study/mitigate to below 80 Vdb	Less than significant
Biological Resources Impact to Special Status Plant Species (stinkbells, bigscale balsam root, Sanford’s arrowhead)	Significant	Survey and avoidance and/or compensatory measures required	Less than significant
Biological Resources Impact to Special Status Wildlife Species (valley elderberry beetle, northwestern pond turtle, white-tailed kite and pallid bat)	Significant	Varies by species	Less than significant
Biological Resources Loss and Degradation of Wetlands	Significant	Survey and avoidance and/or compensatory measures	Less than significant
Geology and Soils Paleontological Resources	Significant	Halt construction followed by consultation/mitigation	Less than significant
Hazards and Hazardous Materials Public Health Hazards at Hazardous Materials Sites	Significant	Prohibit construction that would pose health risks	Less than significant

SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

The EIR identifies the following impacts as “significant and unavoidable”:

Impact	Before Mitigation	Mitigation	After Mitigation
Transportation and Mobility Reduced Capacity of the Transportation System	Significant	None available beyond measures in the Draft General Plan and GGRP	Significant & unavoidable
Air Quality Consistency with Air Quality Planning Efforts	Significant	None available beyond measures in the Draft General Plan and GGRP	Significant & unavoidable
Air Quality Long Term Operational Impacts	Significant	Compliance with Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District Requirements	Significant & unavoidable
Air Quality Exposure to Toxic Air Contaminants	Significant	None available beyond measures in the Draft General Plan and GGRP	Significant & unavoidable

As the table above shows, mitigation measures are not available that would reduce four impacts to a less than significant level. Under CEQA, the plans can be approved if the City Council adopts a “statement of overriding considerations”, explaining why the City would proceed with the project despite the potential environmental effects.

LESS-THAN-SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

Environmental impacts in the following topic areas are considered “less than significant”:

- ▶ Land Use, population, and housing
- ▶ Water resources and water quality
- ▶ Agricultural resources
- ▶ Public services
- ▶ Utilities
- ▶ Cultural resources
- ▶ Aesthetics
- ▶ Energy
- ▶ Greenhouse gas emissions

ALTERNATIVES

CEQA requires that EIRs evaluate alternatives to the “project” that would reduce or avoid significant impacts. The EIR compares the Draft General Plan and GGRP to two alternatives:

- ▶ **Alternative 1. No Project/Existing General Plan.** The No Project Alternative assumes that the Draft General Plan would not be implemented, and that the City would continue to grow as indicated in the existing (2000) General Plan. The new sustainability, energy efficiency, climate change, complete streets, traffic level of service, and water quality/flooding policies in the Draft General Plan and the GGRP would not be adopted.
- ▶ **Alternative 2. Reduced Density/Intensity.** This alternative assumes the same land use designations as the Draft General Plan, but assumes that future uses would occur at lower densities and intensities.

The Draft General Plan GGRP and this EIR provide a strong framework to reduce and environmental effects of future land use. The City has a strong economic development program that supports current businesses and attracts new ones. Maximizing the potential of proposed land use designations is important to the City’s economic development strategy. As a result, the alternatives do not meet established project objectives as well as the Draft General Plan and GGRP.

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