

# 1. Introduction

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Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, Chapter 14 California Code of Regulations, Section 15378[a], the Southeast Greenway General Plan Amendment and Rezoning project is considered a “project” subject to environmental review as its implementation is “an action [undertaken by a public agency] which has the potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.” This Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) provides an assessment of the potential environmental consequences of adoption and implementation of the project, herein referred to as “proposed project.” Additionally, this Draft EIR identifies mitigation measures and alternatives to the proposed project that would avoid or reduce significant impacts. This Draft EIR compares the development of the proposed project with the existing baseline condition, described in detail in Chapter 4.0, Environmental Evaluation, and each subchapter (Chapters 4.1 through 4.14). The City of Santa Rosa (City) is the lead agency for the proposed project. As the current property owner, the California Department of Transportation is a responsible agency. This assessment is intended to inform the City’s decision-makers, other responsible agencies, and the public-at-large of the nature of the proposed project and its effect on the environment.

## 1.1 PROPOSED ACTION

Upon adoption by the City of Santa Rosa City Council, the proposed project would amend the General Plan land use designations and zoning for the parcels in the 57-acre Southeast Greenway Area also referred to as the project site. The proposed Land Use and Circulation Concepts are intended to guide development and conservation in the Southeast Greenway Area through the 2035 buildout horizon of the *Santa Rosa General Plan 2035* (General Plan 2035). The Land Use Concept describes the type and scale of potential development and the Circulation Concept addresses transportation improvements that may occur over the next 18 years in the Southeast Greenway Area. Both the Land Use Concept and the Circulation Concept have been written to be consistent with the other elements of the 2035 General Plan.

## 1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

### 1.2.1 DRAFT EIR

Pursuant to CEQA Section 21080(d)<sup>1</sup> and CEQA Guidelines Section 15063,<sup>2</sup> the City determined that the proposed project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts and that an EIR would be required. In compliance with CEQA Section 21080.4, the City circulated the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR for the proposed project to the Office of Planning and Research State Clearinghouse and interested

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<sup>1</sup> The CEQA Statute is found at California Public Resources Code, Division 13, Sections 21000 to 21177.

<sup>2</sup> The CEQA Guidelines are found at California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Sections 15000 to 15387.

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agencies and persons on April 24, 2017 for a 31-day-review period. A public Scoping Meeting was held on May 15, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. at the Bennett Valley Senior Center, in the City of Santa Rosa. The NOP and scoping process solicited comments from responsible and trustee agencies, as well as interested parties regarding the scope of the Draft EIR. Appendix A of this Draft EIR contains the NOP, as well as the comments received by the City in response to the NOP.

The scope of this EIR was established by the City of Santa Rosa through the EIR scoping process and includes an analysis of both the proposed project's impacts and cumulative impacts in the following issue areas:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation and Circulation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- CEQA- Mandated Assessment Conclusions:
  - Impacts Found Not To Be Significant
  - Significant Unavoidable Impacts
  - Growth-Inducing Impacts
  - Significant Irreversible Changes

As explained in Chapter 4, adoption and implementation of the proposed project would have no impacts related to Agricultural, Forestry, and Mineral Resources; therefore, no detailed analysis discussion is warranted in this Draft EIR.

This Draft EIR will be available for review by the public and interested parties, agencies, and organizations for a 45-day comment period starting on August 21, 2017 and ending on October 4, 2017. During the comment period, the public is invited to provide written comments via mail or e-mail on the Draft EIR to the City of Santa Rosa Planning and Economic Development Department. Written comments should be submitted to:

Jessica Jones, Supervising Planner  
City of Santa Rosa  
Planning & Economic Development Department  
100 Santa Rosa Avenue, Room 3  
Santa Rosa, Ca 95404  
Phone: (707) 543-3410  
Email: [jjones@srcity.org](mailto:jjones@srcity.org) with "Southeast Greenway EIR" as the subject line

### 1.2.2 FINAL EIR

Upon completion of the 45-day review period for the Draft EIR, the City will review all written comments received and prepare written responses to each comment on the adequacy of the Draft EIR. A Final EIR will then be prepared, which contains all of the comments received, responses to comments raising environmental issues, and any changes to the Draft EIR. The Final EIR will then be presented to the City of Santa Rosa for certification as the environmental document for the proposed project. All persons who

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commented on the Draft EIR will be notified of the availability of the Final EIR and the date of the public hearing before the City.

All responses to comments submitted on the Draft EIR by agencies will be provided to those agencies at least 10 days prior to certification of the EIR. The City Council will make findings regarding the extent and nature of the impacts as presented in the EIR. The EIR will need to be certified as having been prepared in compliance with CEQA by the City Council prior to making a decision to approve or deny the proposed project. Public input is encouraged at all public hearings before the City Council or Planning Commission.

After the City Council certifies the EIR, it may then consider action on the proposed project. If approved, the City Council will adopt and incorporate into the project all feasible mitigation measures identified in the EIR and may also require other feasible mitigation measures.

In some cases, the City Council may find that certain mitigation measures are outside the jurisdiction of the City to implement, or that no feasible mitigation measures have been identified for a given significant impact. In that case, the City Council would have to adopt a statement of overriding considerations that determines that economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of the proposed project outweigh the unavoidable, significant effects on the environment.

### 1.2.3 MITIGATION MONITORING

CEQA Section 21081.6 requires that the lead agency adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for any project for which it has made findings pursuant to CEQA Section 21081 or adopted a Negative Declaration pursuant to CEQA Section 21080(c). Such a program is intended to ensure the implementation of all mitigation measures adopted through the preparation of an EIR or Negative Declaration. The Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for the proposed project will be completed as part of the environmental review process.

## 1.3 PROGRAM LEVEL EIR

This Draft EIR is a program-level EIR that analyzes the adoption and implementation of the proposed project. CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines allow lead agencies to prepare a number of types of EIRs. Different types of EIRs are used for varying situations and intended uses. As described in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15161, the most common type of EIR is a *project* EIR, which examines the environmental impacts of a specific development project. As described in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15168, *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 proposed project that is the subject of this EIR consists of long-term plans that will guide future development within the Southeast Greenway Area over an 18-year buildout horizon (e.g., 2017 to 2035) consistent with the *Santa Rosa General Plan 2035* (General Plan 2035). No specific development projects are proposed as part of the project. Therefore, this EIR is a program-level EIR that analyzes the potential significant environmental effects of the adoption and implementation of the proposed project.

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Where the program EIR addresses the program's effects as specifically and comprehensively as is reasonably possible, and future development projects are within the scope of the effects examined in the program EIR, then additional environmental review may not be required for those future projects. When a program EIR is relied on for a subsequent future development project, the lead agency must incorporate feasible mitigation measures and alternatives developed in the program EIR into the subsequent activities (CEQA Guidelines Section 15168[c][3]).

However, as stated above, this program EIR is not project-specific, and does not evaluate the impacts of individual construction-level projects that may be proposed in the future. All future development projects within the Southeast Greenway Area that qualify as a "project" under CEQA are subject to compliance with CEQA, which may require additional, project-specific environmental analysis. Under a program-level EIR approach, in order to identify whether additional analysis would be necessary when a future development project is proposed, the City, acting as the lead agency, will need to determine the following:

- whether the planned characteristics of the project are substantially different from those defined in the programmatic EIR;
- whether the project would require additional mitigation measures; or
- whether specific impacts were not evaluated in sufficient detail in the programmatic EIR.

If any of these conditions apply and the subsequent activity would have effects that are not within the scope of the program EIR, the lead agency must prepare a new Initial Study leading to a Negative Declaration, a Mitigated Negative Declaration, or an EIR unless the activity qualifies for an exemption from the CEQA process.

For all subsequent environmental review documents, within or outside of the scope of the General Plan, this program EIR will serve as the first-tier environmental analysis, which may serve to streamline future environmental review of subsequent projects.

## 1.4 STREAMLINED ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

### 1.4.1 TIERING PROCESS

The CEQA concept of "tiering" refers to the evaluation of general environmental matters in a broad program-level EIR, with subsequent focused environmental documents for individual projects. CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines encourage the use of tiered environmental documents to reduce delays and excessive paperwork in the environmental review process. This is accomplished in tiered documents by eliminating repetitive analyses of issues that were adequately addressed in the program EIR and by incorporating those analyses by reference.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(d) provides guidance for simplifying the preparation of environmental documents by incorporating by reference analyses and discussions. Where an EIR has been prepared or certified for a program or plan, the environmental review for a later activity consistent with the program

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or plan should be limited to effects that were not analyzed as significant in the prior EIR or that are susceptible to substantial reduction or avoidance (CEQA Guidelines Section 15152[d]).

By tiering from this program-level EIR, the environmental analysis for a future project would rely on the EIR for the following:

- a discussion of general background and setting information for environmental topic areas;
- overall growth-related issues;
- issues that were evaluated in sufficient detail in this EIR for which there is no significant new information or change in circumstances that would require further analysis;
- assessment of cumulative impacts; and
- mitigation measures adopted and incorporated as part of the proposed project.

As previously stated, an Initial Study could be prepared for future projects to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the future projects with respect to this EIR to determine what level of additional environmental review, if any, is appropriate.

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