

4. Environmental Evaluation

CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

This chapter of the Draft EIR is made up of 14 subchapters, which evaluate the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts from adoption and implementation of the proposed project. The following sections describe the format of the environmental analysis, the format of the thresholds of significance and the methodology of the cumulative impact analysis.

FORMAT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15128 allows for no analysis of environmental issues for which there is no likelihood of significant impact. Due to the location of the proposed project in an urbanized area in the city of Santa Rosa, no impacts would occur to agricultural, forestry or mineral resources. A brief discussion of each topic is provided as follows:

- **Agricultural Resources:** Maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency categorize lands within Santa Rosa as Urban and Built-Up Land.¹ There are no agricultural lands classified as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance within the city of Santa Rosa. The California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act) 2014 State Report identifies land in Sonoma County that is under Williamson Act contract; however, none are located within the city of Santa Rosa.² Therefore, future development facilitated by the adoption and implementation of the proposed project would not conflict with lands under Williamson Act contract. For these reasons, there would be no impacts to agricultural resources under CEQA.
- **Forestry Resources:** According to 2006 mapping data from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the city of Santa Rosa does not contain any woodland or forestland cover;³ therefore, the city does not contain land zoned for Timberland Production nor does the Santa Rosa Zoning Map identify areas zoned for Timberland Production.⁴ Consequently, there would be no impacts to forestry resources under CEQA.
- **Mineral Resources:** The California Department of Conservation, Geological Survey classifies lands into Aggregate and Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs) based on guidelines adopted by the California State

¹ California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, Sonoma County Important Farmland 2014, <ftp://ftp.consrv.ca.gov/pub/dlrp/FMMP/pdf/2014/son14.pdf>, accessed on May 26, 2017.

² California Department of Conservation, 2015, California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act 2014 Status Report, page 34.

³ California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Fire and Resource Assessment Program, Land Cover Map, http://frap.fire.ca.gov/data/frapgismaps/pdfs/fvegwhr13b_map.pdf, accessed on May 26, 2017.

⁴ City of Santa Rosa, Zoning Map, <http://www.srcity.org/DocumentCenter/View/5046>, accessed on May 26, 2017.

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Mining and Geology Board, as mandated by the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1974. These MRZs identify whether known or inferred significant mineral resources are present in areas. Lead agencies are required to incorporate identified MRZs resource areas delineated by the State into their General Plans.⁵ The City of Santa Rosa has no General Plan Land Use designation for mineral resources.⁶ Therefore, no impacts to mineral sources under CEQA would occur.

Accordingly, this chapter of the Draft EIR is made up of 14 subchapters, which evaluate the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts of the proposed project. In accordance with Appendix F, Energy Conservation, and Appendix G, Environmental Checklist, of the CEQA Guidelines as amended per Assembly Bill 52 (Tribal Cultural Resources) and the California Supreme Court in a December 2015 opinion [*California Building Industry Association (CBIA) v. Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD)*, 62 Cal. 4th 369 (No. S 213478)], the potential environmental effects of the proposed project are analyzed for potential significant impacts in the following 14 environmental issue areas, which are organized with the listed abbreviations:

- Aesthetics (AES)
- Air Quality (AQ)
- Biological Resources (BIO)
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources (CULT)
- Geology and Soils (GEO)
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG)
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials (HAZ)
- Hydrology and Water Quality (HYDRO)
- Land Use and Planning (LU)
- Noise (NOISE)
- Population and Housing (POP)
- Public Services and Recreation (PS)
- Transportation and Circulation (TRANS)
- Utilities and Service Systems (UTIL)

Each subchapter is organized into the following sections:

- **Environmental Setting** offers a description of the existing environmental conditions, providing a baseline against which the impacts of the proposed project can be compared, and an overview of federal, State, regional, and local laws and regulations relevant to each environmental issue.
- **Thresholds of Significance** refer to the quantitative or qualitative standards, performance levels, or criteria used to evaluate the existing setting with and without the proposed project to determine whether the impact is significant. These thresholds are based primarily on the CEQA Guidelines, and also may reflect established health standards, ecological tolerance standards, public service capacity standards, or guidelines established by agencies or experts.
- **Impact Discussion** gives an overview of the potential impacts of the proposed project and explains why impacts are found to be significant or less than significant prior to mitigation. This subsection also includes a discussion of cumulative impacts related to the proposed project. Impacts and mitigation measures are numbered consecutively within each topical analysis and begin with an acronym or abbreviated reference to the impact section.

⁵ Public Resources Code, Division 2, Geology, Mines and Mining, Chapter 9, Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975, Article 4, State Policy for the Reclamation of Mined Lands, Section 2762(a)(1).

⁶ City of Santa Rosa, Santa Rosa General Plan 2035, General Plan Land Use Diagram, <http://www.srcity.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/3094>, accessed on May 26, 2017.

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THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

As noted above, significance criteria are identified before the impact discussion subsection, under the subsection, “Thresholds of Significance.” For each impact identified, a level of significance is determined using the following classifications:

- *Significant (S)* impacts include a description of the circumstances where an established or defined threshold would be exceeded.
- *Less-than-significant (LTS)* impacts include effects that are noticeable, but do not exceed established or defined thresholds, or can be mitigated below such thresholds.
- *No impact* describes circumstances where there is no adverse effect on the environment.

For each impact identified as being significant, the EIR identifies mitigation measures to reduce, eliminate, or avoid the adverse effect. If one or more mitigation measure(s) would reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level successfully, this is stated in the EIR. *Significant and unavoidable (SU)* impacts are described where mitigation measures would not diminish these effects to less-than-significant levels. The identification of a program-level significant and unavoidable impact does not preclude the finding of less-than-significant impacts for subsequent projects that comply with the applicable regulations and meet applicable thresholds of significance.

CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

A cumulative impact consists of an impact created as a result of the combination of the project evaluated in the EIR, together with other reasonably foreseeable impacts not caused by the proposed project. CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 requires an EIR to discuss cumulative impacts of a project when the project’s incremental effect is “cumulatively considerable.” Used in this context, cumulatively considerable means that the incremental effects of an individual project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effect of probable future projects.

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. Where the cumulative impact caused by the project’s incremental effect and the effects of other reasonably foreseeable projects is not significant, the EIR must briefly indicate why the cumulative impact is not significant.

The cumulative impacts discussions in subchapters 4.1 through 4.14 explain the geographic scope of the area affected by each cumulative effect (e.g., immediate project vicinity, city, county, watershed, or air basin). The geographic area considered for each cumulative impact depends upon the impact that is being analyzed. For example, in assessing aesthetic impacts, the pertinent geographic study area is the vicinity of the areas of new development under the proposed project from which the new development can be publicly viewed and may contribute to a significant cumulative visual effect. In assessing macro-scale air quality impacts, on the other hand, all development within the air basin contributes to regional emissions

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of criteria pollutants, and basin-wide projections of emissions is the best tool for determining the cumulative effect.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines permits two different methodologies for completion of the cumulative impact analysis:

- The 'list' approach permits the use of a list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including projects both within and outside the city; and
- The 'projections' approach allows the use of a summary of projections contained in an adopted plan or related planning document, such as a regional transportation plan, or in an EIR prepared for such a plan. The projections may be supplemented with additional information such as regional modeling.

This Draft EIR uses the projections approach and takes into account growth from the proposed project within the Southeast Greenway Area, which encompasses the city limits, sphere of influence (SOI), and the urban growth boundary. In each subchapter of Chapter 4, the cumulative impacts discussion is based on the cumulative development described in Chapter 6, CEQA-Mandated Sections, of this Draft EIR. The following provides a summary of the cumulative impact setting for each impact area:

- **Aesthetics:** The cumulative setting for visual impacts is the land adjacent to the Southeast Greenway Area, in particular the areas where potential future development could occur.
- **Air Quality:** The cumulative air quality setting is the regional growth within the San Francisco Bay Area Air Basin.
- **Biological Resources:** The geographic scope of the cumulative analysis for biological resources is the 5-mile radius surrounding the Southeast Greenway Area.
- **Cultural Resources:** Cumulative impacts to cultural resources occur from potential future development under the proposed project combined with effects of development on lands within the region.
- **Geology and Soils:** The cumulative setting for impacts related to geology and soils is the land adjacent to the Southeast Greenway Area.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** Because GHG emissions are not confined to a particular air basin but are dispersed worldwide, the cumulative analysis focuses on the global impacts.
- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** The cumulative setting for impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials is the land adjacent to the Southeast Greenway Area.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality:** The geographic context used for the cumulative assessment of water quality and hydrology impacts is the Laguna de Santa Rosa Watershed and land adjacent to the Southeast Greenway Area.
- **Land Use and Planning:** The cumulative setting for land use and planning includes the City planning regulations and regional planning, with which the City is required to comply.
- **Noise:** The traffic noise levels are based on cumulative traffic conditions used for the traffic impact analysis, which takes into account cumulative development in the Southeast Greenway Area.

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- **Population and Housing:** Impacts of cumulative growth are considered in the context of their consistency with regional planning efforts.
- **Public Services and Recreation:** Cumulative impacts are considered in the context of the growth from potential future development under the proposed project combined with the estimated growth in the service areas of each service provider.
- **Transportation and Circulation:** The cumulative setting for traffic and circulation applies the county-wide Sonoma County Transportation Authority's (SCTA) SCTM\10 travel demand model to the transportation network in Santa Rosa and the Southeast Greenway Area.
- **Utilities and Service Systems:** Cumulative impacts are considered in the context of the growth from potential future development under the proposed project combined with the estimated growth in the service areas of each utility's service area.

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