

5 CEQA Required Conclusions

This section presents a summary of the impacts of the proposed Pacifica General Plan on several subject areas specifically required by CEQA, including significant irreversible environmental changes, significant unavoidable impacts, growth-inducing impacts, cumulative impacts, and impacts found not to be significant. These findings are based on the analysis provided in Chapter 3: Settings, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures.

5.1 Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes

CEQA Guidelines require an EIR to consider whether “uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c)). “Nonrenewable resource” refers to the physical features of the natural environment, such as land, waterways, etc. Irretrievable commitments of nonrenewable resources associated with the proposed General Plan include:

AIR QUALITY

Increases in vehicle trips and traffic resulting from implementation of the proposed General Plan would potentially contribute to long-term degradation of air quality and atmospheric conditions in the region, other parts of California, and the Western United States. However, technological improvements in automobiles, as well as commercial and industrial machinery, may lower the rate of air quality degradation in the coming decades.

WATER CONSUMPTION

New development under the proposed Plan will increase the demand for public water. It would place a greater demand on the North Coast County Water Supply to increase its water capacity, which supplies Pacifica with water from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and is sourced from seasonal rainfall and collected snowpack in the Sierra Nevada watershed. This increased demand for public water represents an irreversible environmental change.

ENERGY SOURCES

New development under the proposed General Plan would result in increased energy use, in the form of new buildings and transportation. Both residential and nonresidential development use electricity, natural gas, and petroleum products for power, lighting, heating, and other indoor and outdoor services, while cars use both oil and gas. Use of these types of energy for new development would result in the overall increased use of nonrenewable energy resources. This represents an irreversible environmental change.

CONSTRUCTION-RELATED IMPACTS

Irreversible environmental changes could also occur during the course of constructing development projects made possible by the proposed General Plan. New construction would result in the consumption of building materials, such as lumber, sand and gravel for construction. Some of these resources are already being depleted worldwide.

5.2 Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

Significant unavoidable impacts are those that cannot be mitigated to a level that is less than significant. According to CEQA Guidelines 15126(b), an EIR must discuss any significant environmental impacts that cannot be avoided under full implementation of the proposed program. Chapter 3 identified the following significant unavoidable impacts when comparing the proposed Plan to existing conditions:

AIR QUALITY

The implementation of the proposed Plan would cause the rate of increase in VMT and vehicle trips to exceed the rate of increase in population. The increases in VMT and population envisioned under the General Plan were calculated and compared. The baseline (year 2010) daily VMT was 339,501. The projected daily generated VMT of 451,300 under the proposed General Plan in 2035 indicates that implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in an approximately 33 percent increase in VMT from the baseline. The projected VMT only incorporates the effect of changes to the roadway networks and public transit networks, and not the effect of General Plan policies that would further reduce VMT.

The 2010 baseline population was 37,230. Population projections of 39,800 in 2035 under the proposed General Plan indicate that implementation of the proposed General Plan would increase population from the 2010 baseline of 37,230 by 7 percent. Because the rate of increase in VMT would exceed the rate of increase in population, the proposed General Plan would have a significant adverse impact on air quality.

The proposed General Plan includes a number of policies that serve to reduce VMT in relation to population growth within the City of Pacifica. The effect of these policies has not been directly incorporated into VMT projections; including their effect would further reduce projected 2035 VMT.

As BAAQMD CEQA Guidelines require Plan-level analysis to determine significance based on the strict relationship between population and VMT, this determination cannot be modified to reflect the fact that improvements in vehicle fuel efficiency are expected to decrease emissions per vehicle mile traveled over the planning period. As described in the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's 2013 Plan Bay Area air quality analysis, emissions of several criteria pollutants are projected to decrease through 2040, not increase, due to these fuel efficiency gains. As a basis for making a finding of overriding considerations, it is reasonable for the City to find that fuel efficiency, combined with the compact land use and multimodal transportation initiatives represented by proposed Plan policies, would actually result in minimal contribution to the overall regional cumulative impact of criteria pollutant emissions. However, in accordance with BAAQMD requirements, the impact described in this EIR must still be found to be significant and unavoidable based on the assumed strict relationship between population and VMT.

TRANSPORTATION

Implementation of the proposed Plan would contribute to population and job growth resulting in higher amounts of traffic generation and congestion in Pacifica. More specifically, it would cause a significant impact by causing several local intersections and roadways to operate below level of service (LOS) standards, measured at the average daily traffic level. Four of the five intersections identified in the Congestion Management Plan (CMP) would operate at an unacceptable LOS during both morning and evening peak hours. For non-CMP intersections, one of the six intersections would operate at an unacceptable LOS during both the morning and evening peak hours. Seven of 16 CMP roadway segments would operate at an unacceptable LOS during both the morning and evening peak hours.

If the Calera Parkway Project is implemented, it would improve the LOS for roadway segments and intersections, as described in section 3.2. In addition, the proposed General Plan includes numerous policies to reduce traffic impacts to the greatest extent feasible. Where improvements were feasible, they have been incorporated into the proposed Plan. This impact would, however, remain significant, as the identified intersections and roadways would operate below the LOS standards.

5.3 Growth-Inducing Impacts

EIRs must examine the potential growth-inducing impacts of the proposed General Plan. More specifically, CEQA Guidelines require that an EIR “discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d)). This analysis must also consider the removal of obstacles to population growth, such as improvements in the regional transportation system.

Another consideration is that the creation of growth-inducing potential does not automatically lead to growth. Growth occurs through capital investment in new economic opportunities by the private or public sector. These investment patterns reflect, in turn, the desires of investors to mobilize and allocate their resources to development in particular localities and regions. These and other pressures serve to create policy. These factors, combined with the regulatory authority of local governments, mediate the growth-inducing potential or pressure created by a proposed plan. Despite these limitations on the analysis, it is still possible to qualitatively assess the general potential growth-inducing impacts of the proposed General Plan.

PROJECTED GROWTH

The Planning Area will accommodate a population of approximately 39,800 people at buildout in 2035, an increase of about 6.9 percent over the 2010 estimated population of 37,230. This represents an average annual growth rate of about 0.3 percent, which is higher than the average annual growth rate of -0.06 percent experienced in the city over the last 20 years.

The Planning Area is located in an area that is partially urban and is served by existing roadways, utility infrastructure, and service systems. The North Coast County Water Supply and Pacifica Sanitary Sewer Collection System Division provide water service and sanitary sewer service to the city, respectively. The amount of water consumed and wastewater generated by the additional population is minimal and would not require or result in the construction of new treatment facilities or the expansion of existing facilities. Solid waste generated by residents is disposed of through Recology of the Coast, which has sufficient permitted capacity and development under the proposed General Plan would not require substantial increase of its services.

Public services (i.e., police, fire protection, schools, and parks and recreation) for the Planning Area are currently provided by the City of Pacifica Police Department; the City of Pacifica Fire Department in conjunction with North County Fire Authority (also covering Brisbane and Daly City); the Pacifica School District; and the City of Pacifica Department of Parks, Beaches and Recreation Division. Development under the proposed General Plan would be in compliance with all applicable codes for fire safety and emergency access. Additional school age children by the way of new households in the proposed General Plan would not exceed existing school capacity and require the construction of new schools. Increased demand for

public services and facilities, such as police, transportation improvements or park facilities, will be financed by developer contributions in proportion to the demand generated by project occupants and users. Therefore, the proposed project would not tax the existing community services facilities, create an unfair burden on existing users, or require the construction of new public facilities that would cause significant environmental effects.

The proposed General Plan includes elements with goals and policies for managing growth and focusing future development in urban infill areas and protecting the city's system of open spaces. As a consequence, the physical growth inducing effects of the proposed General Plan on other jurisdictions are likely to be minimal.

Indirect growth-inducing impacts such as those associated with job increases that might affect housing and retail demand in other jurisdictions over an extended time period are difficult to assess with precision, since future economic trends may be influenced by unforeseeable events, such as natural disasters and business and development cycles. Moreover, long-term changes in economic and population growth are often regional in scope; they are not influenced solely by changes or policies in Pacifica.

INCREASE IN REGIONAL HOUSING DEMAND

As the employment base in the San Francisco Bay Area continues to increase, more people may be drawn to live in the City of Pacifica even though they may work in other cities. As a result, housing demand may increase in Pacifica and other adjacent areas. The City's Housing Element includes programs to address regional housing needs in the near term, and subsequent revisions will extend, modify, or add to these programs as needed to continue to respond to the City's "fair share" of regional housing needs, as required by law.

JOBS/EMPLOYMENT BALANCE

A city's jobs/employment ratio (jobs to employed residents) would be 1:1 if the number of jobs in the city equaled the number of employed residents. In theory, such a balance would eliminate the need for commuting. More realistically, a balance means that in-commuting and out-commuting are matched, leading to efficient use of the transportation system, particularly during peak hours. The current jobs/employment ratio in Pacifica is 0.17, which means most working adults travel out of the city to work. The proposed General Plan will add more population than jobs. By 2035, the jobs/employment ratio should improve slightly to 0.19, which increases the potential to reduce commuting for work and thus ameliorating peak hour traffic congestion.

5.4 Cumulative Impacts

CEQA requires that the EIR examine cumulative impacts. As discussed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(a)(1), a cumulative impact “consists of an impact which is created as a result of the combination of the project evaluated in the EIR together with other projects causing related impacts.” Furthermore, the analysis of cumulative impacts need not provide the level of detail required of the analysis of impacts from the project itself, but shall “reflect the severity of the impacts and their likelihood of occurrence” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(b)). In order to assess cumulative impacts, the EIR must analyze either a list of past, present, and probable future projects or a summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document. In conducting the analysis for this EIR, ABAG population and employment projections for the City of Pacifica and the adjacent unincorporated areas were reviewed.

CUMULATIVE ANALYSIS PROVIDED IN CHAPTER 3

It is important to note that several analyses presented in Chapter 3 represent cumulative analyses of issues over the General Plan time horizon to 2035 because they combine the anticipated effects of the proposed General Plan with anticipated effects of regional growth and development. Issue areas for which Chapter 3 analyses are specifically cumulative include transportation, air quality, energy and greenhouse gases, and noise, because the project-specific effects cannot reasonably be differentiated from the broader effects of regional growth and development. The cumulative conclusions are summarized there, and where applicable, significant unavoidable impacts listed in Section 5.2.

OTHER CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

For some issue areas evaluated as direct impacts in Chapter 3, concurrent implementation of the proposed General Plan, along with regional growth and development, may result in cumulative impacts such as:

- ***Cumulative Impacts to Geology, Soils and Seismic Risk.*** The geographic area considered for the cumulative geology, soils, and seismic hazards effects is the entire San Francisco Bay Area region. This region is considered seismically active and future development would expose additional people and structures to potentially adverse effects associated with earthquakes, including seismic ground shaking and seismic-related ground failure. However, development facilitated by the proposed General Plan would be constructed in accordance with the most current version of the California Building Code, existing ordinances, and local building codes for seismic safety requirements and recommendations contained in each site-specific geotechnical report for each project. Therefore, the proposed General Plan’s contribution to this potentially significant cumulative impact is not cumulatively considerable.
- ***Cumulative Impacts to Biological Resources.*** Pacifica’s population is expected to increase in coming years, which could result in a decrease in habitat for native flora and

fauna, increased indirect effects such as noise disturbance, increased night lighting, harassment from pets, increased mortality from automobiles, and increased fragmentation of habitat. Pacifica contains habitat for several special-status plants, insects, CRLF, and SFGS. Implementation of the proposed General Plan may result in a considerable incremental contribution to cumulative impacts, because the majority of undeveloped areas in Pacifica (about 50 percent of the Planning Area) have habitat types known to support special-status species. However, due to the policies proposed in the proposed General Plan and Local Coastal Land Use Plan, the proposed Plans' contribution to this potentially significant cumulative impact is not cumulatively considerable.

- ***Cumulative Effects on Water Quality and Stormwater Flows.*** The proposed Plans, in combination with regional growth and development, could increase impervious surfaces resulting in a greater chance of flood and potential impacts to water quality. Implementation of the proposed Plans, together with past present and other reasonably foreseeable future projects in the vicinity, could expose people and/or property to flooding from a 100-year event and sea level rise. However, due to the built-out nature of the Planning Area, and the extensive Plan policies designed to improve stormwater management, provide flood controls, and reduce stormwater pollution, the proposed Project's contribution to this potentially significant cumulative impact is not cumulatively considerable.

These types of impacts are not limited to the planning area but are characteristic of any area that is experiencing population and employment growth.

5.5 Impacts Found Not To Be Significant

CEQA requires that an EIR provide a brief statement indicating why various possible significant impacts were determined to be not significant. Chapter 3 of this EIR discusses all potential impacts, regardless of their magnitude. A similar level of analysis is provided for impacts found to be less than significant as impacts found to be significant. Significance of an impact is assessed in relation to the significance criteria provided in each section in Chapter 3. A summary of all impacts is provided in the Executive Summary of this EIR.

Non-significant impacts are those effects that have no significant adverse impact on the environment. The following issues were not included in the detailed analysis of this project because these resources either do not exist or are not impacted by the proposed Plan, and no comments were received regarding these topics in response to the General Plan EIR Notice of Preparation.

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

A significant impact would occur if implementation of the proposed Plan would result in one or more of the following:

1. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use;
2. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract;
3. Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g));
4. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use; or
5. Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

Agricultural uses in total currently constitute 5 percent of the Planning Area, at 361 acres. About 260 acres of this are within City limits, at Millwood Ranch, Park Pacifica Stables, and properties directly north of Sharp Park and along Linda Mar Boulevard. About 104 acres are outside city limits, at Shamrock Ranch between San Pedro Creek and Highway 1. Most land in this category involves horse boarding and trail riding and has a rural character.

The proposed Plan does not involve any changes to existing agricultural or forestry resources or existing land use designations on these sites. The city's current Land Use Element includes policies to ensure that the maximum amount of prime agricultural land is maintained and protected, and that conflicts are minimized between urban land uses and agricultural uses.¹ The proposed General Plan would not create any changes to agricultural or forest land, and therefore would have no impact on any agriculture and/or forest resources.

¹ City of Pacifica, City of Pacifica General Plan Land Use Element, 1980.