

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

This section of the EIR discusses each of the potentially significant effects of implementing the City of San Diego Draft General Plan, and identifies mitigation measures to reduce impacts found to be significant in the EIR analysis. This EIR analyzes the environmental issue areas identified in accordance with CEQA Guidelines, Section 15000 et. seq.

Environmental Issue Areas

The environmental issue areas analyzed in this section of the EIR include:

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| 1. Agricultural Resources | 10. Noise |
| 2. Air Quality | 11. Paleontological Resources |
| 3. Biological Resources | 12. Population and Housing |
| 4. Geologic Conditions | 13. Public Services and Facilities |
| 5. Health and Safety | 14. Public Utilities |
| 6. Historic Resources | 15. Transportation/Traffic/Circulation/Parking |
| 7. Hydrology | 16. Visual Effects and Neighborhood Character |
| 8. Land Use | 17. Water Quality |
| 9. Mineral Resources | |

Each environmental issue listed above is analyzed in the following manner:

- **Existing Conditions** describes the environmental setting in the vicinity of the project before the commencement of the project to provide a baseline for comparing “before the project” and “after the project” environmental conditions in accordance with Section 15125 of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Thresholds of Significance** defines and lists specific criteria used to determine whether an impact is or is not considered to be significant. Major sources used in crafting criteria appropriate to the specifics of the project include: the CEQA Guidelines; City of San Diego, state, federal or other standards applicable to an impact category; and officially established thresholds of significance. “. . . an ironclad definition of significant is not possible because the significance of an activity may vary with the setting.” (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064[b]). Principally, a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within an area affected by the project, including land, air, water, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic and aesthetic significance” constitutes a significant impact (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15382).
- **Impact Analysis** presents evidence, based to the maximum extent possible on scientific and factual data, for the cause and effect relationship between the proposed project and the potential changes in the environment. The exact magnitude, duration, extent, frequency, range, or other parameters of a potential impact are ascertained, to the extent possible, to determine whether impacts may be significant. All of the potential effects,

including direct effects, reasonably foreseeable indirect effects, and considerable contribution to cumulative effects, are considered.

- **Mitigation Framework** identifies the means by which potentially significant impacts could be reduced or avoided in cases where the EIR analysis determined such impacts to be potentially significant. Standard existing regulations, requirements, programs, and procedures that are applied to all similar projects are taken into account in identifying additional project specific mitigation that may be needed to reduce significant impacts. Mitigation, in addition to measures that the lead agency will implement, can also include measures that are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15091 [a] [2]).
- **Significance of Impact with Mitigation Framework** identifies the impacts that may remain after application of mitigation measures, and whether the remaining impacts are or are not considered significant. When these impacts, even with the inclusion of mitigation measures, cannot be mitigated to a level considered less than significant, they are identified as “significant unavoidable impacts.” To approve a project with significant unavoidable impacts, the lead agency must adopt a Statement of Overriding Consideration. In adopting such a statement, the lead agency finds that it has reviewed the EIR, has balanced the benefits of the project that outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, thus, the adverse environmental effects may be considered “acceptable” (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15093 [a]).

Approach to Environmental Analysis

The environmental analysis in this EIR addresses potential impacts associated with implementation of the Draft General Plan at both the planning horizon year (2030) and buildout. The 2030 planning horizon represents an approximate 20- to 25-year period in which land use planning decisions are expected to have foreseeable implications. Beyond that point, gauging the effects of planning under dynamic conditions is extremely difficult.

“Buildout,” for purposes of this Program EIR, generally refers to the theoretical maximum buildout of all land addressed in the Draft General Plan as described on **Tables 3.0-1 and 3.0-2**. The theoretical build-out scenario is included to provide the reader with the ability to understand the worst-case scenario of full, but theoretical development of the General Plan.¹ Unlike a forecast, a theoretical buildout scenario does not have a time horizon, such as 2030, nor does it include transportation, demographic, economic assumptions typically used by a forecasted model to provide a more realistic land use planning data. Therefore, due to regulatory constraints, physical constraints, and foreseeable market conditions, realization of this scenario is highly unlikely; but, this scenario is analyzed because the General Plan land use categories do provide a theoretical capacity. As shown on **Table 3.0-1**, the total number of housing units at buildout would be 754,400, approximately 144,351 or 24 percent more units than projected for the year 2030. As shown on **Table 3.0-2**, the total building floor area of non-residential development as buildout would be 1,097,680,700 square feet, approximately 821,978,400 or 298 percent more

¹ This section was also provided in order to be responsive to case law as a 2003 court decision regarding the El Dorado County General Plan required that El Dorado County address theoretical build out.

square feet than projected for the year 2030. The methodologies for calculating buildout of housing units and non-residential building square footage are described in the notes below each table.

Although highly unlikely, the buildout scenario demonstrates residential and non-residential development levels that could theoretically be achieved under the General Plan. However, due to regulatory constraints, physical constraints, and foreseeable market conditions, realization of this scenario is highly unlikely; but this scenario is analyzed because the General Plan land use categories do provide the theoretical capacity (residential units and non-residential building square feet) to allow the buildout statistics presented on **Tables 3.0-1 and 3.0-2**.

The analysis of impacts under the 2030 planning horizon is more detailed than the buildout analysis because of the uncertainties associated with projecting buildout conditions. For 2030, the analysis is quantitative where appropriate and possible. For buildout, the analysis is qualitative except in certain circumstances that are noted for specific topical areas. The analysis of the theoretical buildout scenario is provided in Section 3.18 of this document.