

CHAPTER 2.0

INTRODUCTION

This EIR is prepared by the Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC) acting on behalf of the City of San Diego's Redevelopment Agency (Redevelopment Agency), which is the designated Lead Agency, as defined Section 15050(a) of the CEQA Guidelines. CCDC has prepared this EIR to address the potential environmental effects of a series of planning documents that govern the development of downtown San Diego. The document is intended to be used by the Redevelopment Agency, as Lead Agency, and the City of San Diego, as a Responsible Agency, in approving the proposed Plans and Ordinance. In addition, as a Program EIR, the document is intended to be used by the Redevelopment Agency as well as other Responsible Agencies when taking action on subsequent permits to allow development in accordance with the proposed Plans and Ordinance.

2.1 THE PROPOSED PLANS AND ORDINANCE

A hierarchy of planning documents control development of the approximately 1,445 acres which comprise the downtown area. The primary documents include: the Redevelopment Plan for the Centre City Project Area, the Centre City Community Plan and three Planned District Ordinances (Marina, Gaslamp and Centre City) that implement the policies and guidelines contained in the Centre City Community Plan. The documents that are proposed to be revised under this EIR include the Centre City Community Plan, the Redevelopment Plan for the Centre City Project Area, and the Centre City Planned District Ordinance. For the purpose of this EIR, the revisions to these plans and ordinance are collectively referred to as the "proposed Plans and Ordinance." The revision to the Centre City Community Plan is referred to as the "proposed Downtown Community Plan," or "proposed Plan." A full list of the documents subject to proposed amendments is presented in Chapter 4.0 of this report.

2.1.1 DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY PLAN

The proposed Downtown Community Plan would replace the Centre City Community Plan, which was adopted in 1992. A Community Plan is part of the City of San Diego's Progress Guide and General Plan and provides an overall framework for development by defining land use types and building intensities, the transportation system, recreational opportunities and urban design. The primary objective of the Downtown Community Plan is to strengthen downtown's role as the regional urban center for the metropolitan area, consistent with the City's Strategic Framework Element of the General Plan.

2.1.2 REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

In order to reflect the changes contained in the Downtown Community Plan, the Redevelopment Plan for the Centre City Project Area would be amended for consistency. Some of the purposes of the Redevelopment Plan include the following: elimination of blighted conditions, including small and irregular lots, incompatible land uses, obsolete and/or dilapidated buildings, and sub-standard and deteriorated public improvements; rehabilitation of buildings and preservation of architecturally-significant historic sites and buildings; planning, redesign, and development of areas that are stagnant and underutilized; participation of owners and tenants in the revitalization of their properties; and, provision of low- and moderate-income housing. The primary revisions proposed result from replacing descriptions of land use districts to be consistent with the Downtown Community Plan, and to revise estimates of residential population and number of residential units in the Redevelopment Area.

2.1.3 PLANNED DISTRICT ORDINANCE

Similarly, the Centre City Planned District Ordinance (PDO) that applies within the Downtown Community Plan area would be revised. The Centre City PDO is the primary regulatory document that would implement the goals and policies identified in the Downtown Community Plan. PDO regulations with respect to land use, density and intensity, building massing, sun access, architectural design, landscaping, streetscaping, lighting, and other development characteristics would be modified to be consistent with the Downtown Community Plan. No changes are proposed to the Gaslamp and Marina Planned District Ordinances.

2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS

Pursuant to the requirements of the CEQA of 1970 (California Public Resources Code, §21000 et. seq.) and the CEQA Guidelines, environmental review is required for any action that may result in a significant impact on the environment. In accordance with Section 15063 of the CEQA Guidelines, the CCDC conducted an Initial Study to determine the potential environmental consequences associated with approval and implementation of the proposed Plans and Ordinance. On the basis of this evaluation, it was determined that future development could result in significant environmental impacts and that an EIR must be prepared.

2.2.1 SCOPE OF THE EIR

The scope of the analysis for this EIR was determined by the Initial Study completed by CCDC, and comments received during a scoping meeting held on April 26, 2004 and in response to a Notice of Preparation (NOP) that was distributed on April 1, 2003. The NOP and the comment letters that were received are contained in Appendix 2.1.

Based on the Initial Study, responses to the NOP and comments made during the scoping meeting, it was determined that the proposed Plans and Ordinance might result in potentially significant adverse environmental impacts in the following areas:

- Air Quality;
- Cultural Resources;
- Energy;
- Geology & Seismicity
- Hazardous Materials;
- Hydrology/Water Quality;
- Land Use and Planning;
- Noise;
- Paleontological Resources;
- Population/Housing;
- Public Facilities and Services;
- Transportation, Circulation, Access, and Parking; and
- Aesthetics/Visual Quality.

The EIR addresses both “plan to ground” impacts as well as “plan to plan” impacts. The “plan to ground” analysis addresses the changes or impacts that will result from implementation of the proposed Plans and Ordinance as compared to the existing conditions (refer to Chapter 5.0 of the EIR). The “plan to plan” analysis addresses the changes or impacts that will result from implementation of the proposed Plans and Ordinance as compared to the currently adopted Plans. The “plan to plan” analysis is concentrated in the discussion of the No Project alternative that would retain the existing adopted Centre City Community Plan, Redevelopment Plan for the Centre City Project Area, and Centre City PDO (refer to Chapter 10.0 of the EIR).

2.2.2 PURPOSE OF THE EIR

This EIR has been prepared to achieve the following objectives:

- Inform decision-makers and the general public of the potential environmental consequences of the approval and implementation of the proposed Plans and Ordinance;
- Identify project alternatives or mitigation measures that are available to avoid or reduce potential significant environmental impacts;
- Serve as a basis for environmental review of all public and private activities or undertakings pursuant to the Redevelopment and Community plans and Planned District Ordinance, as updated and resulting from approval of the proposed Plans and Ordinance;
- Provide environmental review for other lead or responsible agencies with jurisdiction over future development falling within the scope of the proposed Plans and Ordinance as updated; and,
- Reduce the environmental review required as subsequent development occurs according to the goals, policies, and regulations of the proposed Plans and Ordinance.

In order to meet the first objective, the EIR forecasts the growth of downtown pursuant to the various policies and regulations that are proposed as part of the proposed Plans and Ordinance. This growth is assumed to include implementation of the policies and regulations included in the proposed Downtown Community Plan, Redevelopment Plan for the Centre City Project Area and Centre City PDO. Based on this foundation, the EIR identifies physical changes in the environment that may result from development in accordance with these policies and regulations (refer to Chapter 5.0). In addition, the EIR identifies mitigation measures that are available to avoid or minimize effects that could result in significant environmental impacts. These mitigation measures are identified in Chapter 5.0 of the EIR as well as the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP), which will accompany the Final EIR. These measures include measures that are to be carried out as part of specific future developments.

Environmental review for specific development projects will be accomplished using the Secondary Study process defined in the Redevelopment Agency's own CEQA Guidelines, as allowed by Sections 15168 and 15180. The Secondary Study includes the same evaluation criteria as the Initial Study defined in Section 15063 of the CEQA Guidelines. A Secondary Study would be prepared for each subsequent development to determine whether the potential impacts were anticipated in this EIR. No additional environmental documentation would be required for subsequent projects if the Secondary Study determines that the potential environmental effects have been adequately addressed in the EIR and/or individual developments would implement appropriate mitigation measures identified in the MMRP accompanying the EIR.

The Secondary Study review will include an analysis of the relationship of the development under consideration to the relevant goals and policies of the Community Plan which are summarized in Table 1.3-2. As discussed throughout Chapter 5.0 of the EIR, implementation of these goals and policies would reduce environmental impacts associated with future development.

If the Secondary Study identifies new impacts or a substantial change in circumstances, additional environmental documentation would be required. The form of this documentation would depend upon the nature of the impacts of the development proposal being considered. Should a development result in new or substantially more severe significant impacts that are not adequately covered in the EIR, or there is a substantial change in circumstances that would require major revision to the previous EIR, or new information comes to light which was not known at the time the previous EIR was certified, a Subsequent EIR or Supplement to the EIR would be prepared in accordance with Sections 15162 and 15163 of the CEQA Guidelines. If potential new significant impacts can be fully mitigated, a Mitigated Negative Declaration would be prepared. More detailed development-specific studies conducted as part of this subsequent environmental review would further quantify environmental impacts and generate project-specific mitigation measures to avoid or minimize significant environmental impacts of specific developments.

2.2.3 TYPE OF EIR

This document has been prepared as a Program EIR in accordance with Section 15168 (a)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines. Under this section, a Program EIR "may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related ...in connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other general criteria to govern the continuing program."

Preparation of a Program EIR is also appropriate in light of Section 15180 of the CEQA Guidelines related to Redevelopment Projects. Section 15180 states:

- (a) All public and private activities or undertakings pursuant to or in furtherance of a redevelopment plan constitute a single project, which shall be deemed approved at the time of adoption of the redevelopment plan by the legislative body. The EIR in connection with the redevelopment plan shall be submitted in accordance with Section 33352 of the Health and Safety Code.
- (b) An EIR on a redevelopment plan shall be treated as a program EIR with no subsequent EIRs required for individual components of the redevelopment plan unless a subsequent EIR or a supplement to an EIR would be required by Section 15162 or 15163.

2.2.4 ORGANIZATION OF THE EIR

The EIR is comprised of a series of volumes. Volume I is commonly referred to as the EIR because it contains all of the basic elements mandated by CEQA. As such, Volume I contains a complete description of the proposed Plans and Ordinance, a comprehensive discussion of impacts and mitigations associated with the proposed Plans and Ordinance and a discussion of alternatives and cumulative impacts. Volumes 2.0 through 4.0 contain all of the technical reports and other documents that are referenced in the EIR. Subsequent volumes will also contain the comments received in response to the EIR, and the responses to those comments.

2.2.4.1 Volume 1A (EIR)

This volume is organized into the following chapters:

- **Chapter 1.0 Executive Summary** provides a summary of the proposed Plans and Ordinance along with a table identifying significant impacts, proposed mitigation measures, and impact rating after mitigation. This chapter also contains a summary of the project alternatives that have been considered and compares the potential impacts of the alternatives with those of the proposed Plans and Ordinance.
- **Chapter 2.0 Introduction** contains an overview of the proposed Plans and Ordinance and the environmental review process.
- **Chapter 3.0 Environmental Setting** contains a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project area from both a local and regional perspective. The environmental setting is intended, in part, to constitute the baseline physical conditions against which the EIR determines whether an impact is significant.
- **Chapter 4.0 Project Description** provides a detailed discussion of the proposed Plans and Ordinance. It also includes a list of discretionary actions that may be required to implement the proposed Plans and Ordinance including subsequent development proposals.
- **Chapter 5.0 Environmental Analysis** provides a detailed evaluation of specific issue areas that may be associated with significant environmental impacts. The discussion of each issue begins with a discussion of the existing conditions related to the issue to serve as a basis of analysis. An evaluation of potential impacts follows. The discussion of impacts is preceded by a statement of specific thresholds that are used to determine if the impacts would be significant. In order to clearly identify significant impacts, each significant impact is introduced with bold type and paraphrased in a box that is imbedded into the text. Each significant issue is given a unique alpha-numeric number. Once the impacts have been evaluated, specific mitigation measures are identified to avoid or reduce significant impacts. The mitigation measures use the same numbering system as the impact to help the reader associate the mitigation with the appropriate impact.
- **Chapter 6.0 Cumulative Impacts** identifies the impact of the proposed Plans and Ordinance in combination with other planned and future development in the region.

- **Chapter 7.0 Growth Inducement** evaluates the potential influence the proposed Plans and Ordinance may have on growth within the project area as well as the region.
- **Chapter 8.0 Effects Found Not To Be Significant** lists all of the issues determined in the Initial Study to be not significant, including a brief summary of the basis for this determination.
- **Chapter 9.0 Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes** identifies all of the significant impacts related to the proposed Plans and Ordinance that cannot be avoided.
- **Chapter 10.0 Alternatives** provides a description of alternatives to the proposed Plans and Ordinance. Due to the nature of the project and the environmental issues, the discussion of alternatives is focused on the No Project alternative that evaluates the environmental consequences of developing downtown in accordance with the existing Centre City Community Plan and related planning controls. Other approaches to the land use plan considered during the formulation of the proposed Plans and Ordinance are discussed as alternatives considered but rejected.
- **Chapter 11.0 References** lists all of the documents which are cited in the EIR but not included in the appendix volumes.
- **Chapter 12.0 Individuals and Organizations Consulted** lists all of the individuals who are cited in the EIR.
- **Chapter 13.0 Certifications** identifies all of the persons who were directly involved in the preparation of the EIR.

2.2.4.2 Volume 1B (EIR)

Volume 1B includes the Responses to Comments, Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Plan and Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations which are part of the Final EIR.

2.2.4.23 Volume 2 (Technical Reports)

Volume 2 contains all of the technical reports which were prepared in association with the EIR. These reports are referenced throughout the EIR.

2.2.4.34 Volume 3 (Traffic Model Output)

Due to their size and technical nature, the traffic model output associated with the Traffic Report (Appendix 2.3) are included in a separate volume which is available to technical specialists who may desire to review the computer printouts upon which the traffic analysis is based.

2.3 EIR REVIEW PROCESS

The EIR process occurs in two basic stages. The first stage is the Draft EIR, which offers the public the opportunity to comment on the document, while the second stage is the Final EIR, which provides the basis for approving the proposed Plans and Ordinance.

2.3.1 DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR ~~will be~~was circulated for a 45-day public review period from July 28, 2005 through September 12, 2005. In accordance with 15087 (a) (1) of the CEQA Guidelines, a Notice of Availability ~~will be~~was placed in a newspaper of general circulation in the area (The *San Diego Daily Transcript*). Copies of the EIR ~~will be~~were distributed to responsible agencies as well as certain special districts, citizens and interest groups. Copies of the Draft EIR ~~will be~~were available for review and comment at CCDC's office located at 225 Broadway, Suite 1100, San Diego, CA, as well as the downtown library located at 820 E Street. An electronic copy of the EIR ~~is~~was available for review and/or downloading on CCDC's web site at www.ccdc.com. Compact disks (CD) containing the EIR ~~are~~were available upon request from CCDC. A hardcopy of the document ~~is~~was also available for the cost of reproduction. Requests ~~should be~~were made to Alexandra Elias at 619.235.2200.

The public review ~~is intended to~~focused "on the sufficiency of the document in identifying and analyzing the possible impacts on the environment and ways in which the significant effects of the project might be avoided or mitigated (Section 15204, CEQA Guidelines)." Comments on the adequacy of the EIR ~~were~~should be put in writing and sent to the following address within the allotted 45-day public review period.

Alexandra Elias, Senior Planner
CENTRE CITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
225 Broadway, Suite 1100
San Diego, CA 92101

Comments ~~were~~must be received or postmarked by the last date of the public review period.

2.3.2 FINAL EIR

The Final EIR process includes preparation of the following: detailed responses to comments received during the public review period, an MMRP, and Findings and Statements of Overriding Considerations. The culmination of this process is the public hearing where the City Council and Redevelopment Agency will determine whether to certify the Final EIR as being complete in accordance with CEQA.

Volume 1A includes modifications to the Draft EIR which result from one three primary sources. Many of the changes are in response to comments received on the EIR during the public review period. Others resulted from testimony at past public hearings subsequent to the end of public review. Lastly, other text and graphic changes, unrelated to public comment or testimony, were

made to clarify the EIR or to reflect changes in the Proposed Community Plan that occurred after public review. Text modifications are indicated in strikeout/underline format.

A brief summary of these modifications is provided below.

Changes in Response to Evolution of Proposed Plans or Ordinance

- Original PDO section number references were eliminated to avoid confusion since the section numbers will be changed (various pages);
- At the request of the Airport Authority, the project description includes a proposal to amend the City's Land Development Code to remove building height limitations imposed by a runway that no longer exists as well as noting the fact that this would not change the EIR conclusions as the land use forecasts assumed these building height limitations would not apply (page 4-42 and 43); and
- Changing the title of the Flexible Use designation to Mixed Commercial (various pages).

Changes in Response to Public Comment

- Information on police staffing was updated (page 5.4-4 and 5).

Changes in Response to Development Services Department

- Discussion explaining why there would be no significant land use conflicts between industrial and residential development (page 5.1-21);
- Cultural and paleontology mitigation measures replaced with standard City language (pages 5.3-23-31 and 5.12-2-7);
- Preliminary discussion of environmental considerations associated with potential fire station site in East Village was eliminated to avoid giving the impression that no further environmental review would be required to construct a fire station at this location (page 5.4-4 and 13);
- The land uses subject to 45 dBA CNEL requirements was more specifically defined to include residential, hospital and hotels and CNEL was added as the unit of measure for interior noise levels (pages 5.7-7 and 16);
- Mitigation Measure NOI D.1-1 was clarified with respect to the fact that outdoor recreation areas would not be reduced to 65 dBA CNEL if it interfered with the recreation activities (page 5.7-17);
- Expansion of the water supply discussion to reference the role of Water Supply Assessments at the project level pursuant to SB 610 as allowing water supply to be addressed throughout buildout (pages 5.4-7, 8, 13 and 14);
- Additional text added to explain why only the No Project alternative was considered (page 10.1 and 2); and
- Discussion of other land use scenarios considered by the steering committee were eliminated because they do not represent alternatives as defined by CEQA (pages 10.11-13).

Changes in Response to Planning Commission

- New traffic mitigation was added to require projects generating more than 2,400 ADT to prepare individual traffic studies pursuant to the City's Traffic Impact Manual (page 5.2-50); and
- New traffic mitigation measure was added to commit CCDC to initiate efforts with Caltrans and SANDAG to find long-term solutions for anticipated traffic congestion on the freeway system serving downtown (page 5.2-52).

Volume 1B includes Responses to Comments, Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Plan, and Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Responses to comments received during the public review period are contained in Volume 1B.1 of the Final EIR. Individual comments within each letter ~~that is received will have been~~ numbered and a specific written response ~~will be~~ offered for each individual comment. The responses will be available for review no less than 14 calendar days prior to the public hearing to consider EIR certification.

An MMRP, prepared in accordance with Section 15097 of the CEQA Guidelines, ~~will be~~ included in Volume 1B.2 of ~~in~~ the Final EIR. This document ~~will include~~ a summary of significant impacts identified in the EIR along with any proposed mitigation measures which are identified to avoid or reduce the impact.

Detailed Findings of Fact ~~will be~~ contained in Volume 1B.3 of attached to the Final EIR. Pursuant to Section 15091 of the CEQA Guidelines, the Findings ~~will identify~~ each significant impact addressed in the EIR and make a specific conclusion for each impact as to whether the impact can be reduced to a below a level of significance after implementation of mitigation. As some of the ~~Should any~~ environmental impacts ~~have been~~ determined not to be reduced to below a level of significance, a Statement of Overriding Considerations ~~would be~~ is included in Volume 1B.3 ~~be prepared~~ to identify the social, economic, technical or other factors taken into consideration by the City Council and/or Redevelopment Agency in deciding whether to approve the proposed Plans and Ordinance despite unmitigated significant impacts.

2.3.3 SUBSEQUENT ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

As described above, future development proposed pursuant to the proposed Plans and Ordinance would be reviewed in light of the Final EIR. As each new development is proposed, a Secondary Study would be prepared to determine if the EIR adequately addressed the potential environmental impacts of the proposed development (CEQA Guidelines Sections 15168 and 15180). For a complete discussion of the Secondary Study process and subsequent environmental review, refer to Section 2.2.2.

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