
5.2 GROWTH INDUCING IMPACTS

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To comply with CEQA, an EIR must discuss the ways in which the proposed project will affect economic and commercial growth in the vicinity of the project and how that growth will, in turn, affect the surrounding environment [CEQA Guidelines section 15126.2(d)]. Under CEQA, this growth is not to be considered necessarily detrimental, beneficial, or of significant consequence. Induced growth is considered a significant impact only if it affects (directly or indirectly) the ability of agencies to provide needed public services, or if it can be demonstrated that the potential growth, in some other way, significantly affects the environment.

Introduction to Growth Inducement Issues

Growth can be induced in a number of ways, including through the elimination of obstacles to growth, or through the stimulation of economic activity within the region. The discussion of the removal of obstacles to growth relates directly to the removal of infrastructure limitations (typically through the provision of additional capacity or supply) or the reduction or elimination of regulatory constraints on growth that could result in growth unforeseen at the time of project approval.

Elimination of Obstacles to Growth

The elimination of either physical or regulatory obstacles to growth is considered to be a growth-inducing effect. A physical obstacle to growth typically involves the lack of public service infrastructure. The extension of public service infrastructure, including roadways, water mains, and sewer lines, into areas that are not currently provided with these services would be expected to support new development. Similarly, the elimination or change to a regulatory obstacle, including existing growth and development policies, could result in new growth. In the case of the Specific Plan, all utilities extended or constructed as part of the project would be designed to serve only the Specific Plan area and any expansions of existing utilities would be only for the pro-rata incremental need of the project.

Economic Effects

Increased Demand on Secondary Markets

Development (residential or employment-generating uses) typically generates a secondary or indirect demand for other goods and services. The secondary or economic change can be quantified by an economic multiplier, which is an economic term used to describe inter-relationships among various sectors of the economy. One aspect of the multiplier effect is the potential catalytic force a project can have on satellite or follow-up development because it creates a demand or market to be served (e.g., neighborhood commercial development around residential development).

Increased Pressure on Land Use Intensification

Unforeseen future development can be spurred by the construction of certain projects that have the effect of creating unique and currently unmet market demands, or by creating economic incentive for future projects by substantially increasing surrounding property values. These types of impacts are most often identified for projects developed in areas that are currently lacking a full spectrum of economic activity. For example, newly developing office areas may be lacking in a full range of support commercial uses; this support commercial demand can cause increased pressure for rezones or general plan amendments aimed at providing adequate land to accommodate businesses seeking to serve the unmet demand.

Growth-Inducing Effects of the Proposed Project

Elimination of Obstacles to Growth

The construction of the proposed project would eliminate some existing obstacles to growth. The standard scenario for eliminating an obstacle to growth involves the extension or provision of utility or service to an area that was not previously served. For example, the extension of a water main into an area where growth has been prohibited because of lack of domestic water service may be considered growth inducing if there is excess capacity in the water main to serve more than planned growth. Limited utilities distribution and collection infrastructure currently exists in the Specific Plan area. Implementation of the proposed project would include the extension of new and/or additional water, electrical and natural gas distribution infrastructure, and wastewater and storm drainage collection infrastructure. Under Sewer Option 2, a sewer main would be extended across I-80 into unincorporated, private lands.

The existing City land use plan involved approval for expansion of both freeway interchanges in Lagoon Valley and the extension of major roadways to the area west of I-80. The proposed Specific Plan does not include expansion of freeway overcrossings or extension of new roadways west of I-80.

Increased Demand on Secondary Markets

The proposed project would bring new residential, business village, commercial and recreational uses to the City of Vacaville. These uses would bring residents and employees to the area and could create an economic incentive for future projects by substantially increasing surrounding property values. In general, an additional dollar spent in the county for these goods and services is re-spent on additional goods and services (due to the "multiplier" effect). Therefore, the anticipated increase in spending on secondary and support services could increase growth pressures in the region.

In 1990, the City of Vacaville approved the Lower Lagoon Valley Policy Plan (1990 Policy Plan), together with an associated rezoning and general plan amendment, to allow the development of approximately 7 million sf of office/medical/commercial space, 730 residential units, and a golf course. Implementation of the proposed project would include construction of approximately one million sf of business village/commercial uses, 1,325 residential units and a golf course. The proposed project would reduce the land designated for business village/commercial and would increase the land designated for recreation and open space. The proposed project would add approximately 3,750 residents compared to approximately 2,066. However, the project would generate substantially fewer employees. Therefore, the proposed project would have

less of an effect on secondary markets than if the project site were developed under the City General Plan.

Increased Pressure on Land Use Intensification

The proposed project would result in the construction of employment generating uses, such as retail, commercial, business village, and recreational uses on the project site. Nearby properties are not developed in established uses, and could be subject to increased development pressures as a result of the implementation of the proposed project. The majority of land surrounding the Specific Plan area is privately owned, undeveloped hillside land to the east, north, and south. It is possible that the development of this project could increase the pressure on the City of Vacaville to intensify the land use designations and zoning on adjacent or nearby properties.

Summary

The proposed project could induce growth through the extension of infrastructure (water, wastewater, electricity and natural gas, roadways, storm drainage) to an area that has limited facilities. The proposed project would also add 3,750 new residents to the City of Vacaville.

The City of Vacaville's Planned Growth Ordinance (PGO) was established to ensure that the City's infrastructure and services are capable of serving new residential growth. On an annual basis, the City Council reviews a status report that provides a level of service analysis for infrastructure and services including sewer, water and traffic. The PGO includes a requirement that a base inventory of up to 1,000 units within approved and un-built projects be maintained on an annual basis. Units that have building permit allocations and/or are eligible to be issued permits at any time make up the 1,000-unit inventory. The allocation process provides a mechanism to maintain the 1,000 un-built unit base inventory. As the inventory falls below 1,000 units, new projects are added through the recording of a final map or through City Council approval of allocations following approval of a planned development. The Council maintains the flexibility to grant allocations over the 1,000 un-built units. The number of units (or the equivalent) to be developed under the Specific Plan was established consistent with the PGO (see Table 3-2 in Chapter 3, Project Description). Because the density of the proposed project is less than current allowable development in the City of Vacaville General Plan, and project phasing would be accomplished consistent with the PGO, growth-inducing impacts would be less-than-significant.

5.3 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

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Under CEQA, an EIR must analyze the extent to which a project's primary and secondary effects would commit resources to uses that future generations will probably be unable to reverse [CEQA Guidelines section 15126.2(c); 15127].

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the long-term commitment of resources of the project site to urban land use. The proposed project would likely result in or contribute to the following irreversible environmental changes:

- Conversion of existing undeveloped land to urban land uses, thus precluding other alternate land uses in the future.
- Increased ambient noise.
- Conversion of existing habitat and irreversible loss of wildlife.
- Irreversible commitment of municipal resources to the provision of services and operations of infrastructure for future urban and suburban development.
- Irreversible consumption of goods and services associated with the future population.
- Increased traffic volumes on existing roadways and the establishment of roads in areas not presently provided with vehicular access.
- Degradation of air quality.
- Irreversible consumption of energy and natural resources associated with the future population.
- Possible demand for and use of goods, services, and resources for this project to the exclusion of projects in other locations.

These irreversible impacts, which are unavoidable consequences of urban growth, are discussed in Sections 4.2 through 4.15 of this Draft EIR.

5.4 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

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The following is a summary of significant and unavoidable impacts identified in the technical sections of this EIR. For a complete discussion of each impact, please refer to Sections 4.2 through 4.15.

- 4.2-6 Development of the Proposed Project would convert Important Farmland to developed use.
- 4.3-2 Proposed project would create additional demand necessitating the construction or expansion of existing recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.
- 4.3-3 Proposed project could increase use of existing park facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility could occur or be accelerated.
- 4.4-1 Implementation of the Proposed Project would alter scenic vistas and the visual character of scenic resources.
- 4.4-2 Implementation of the Proposed Project would alter the existing visual character of the Lower Lagoon Valley.
- 4.4-3 The Proposed Project would create new sources of light which could adversely affect nighttime views of the Specific Plan area.
- 4.5-3 Project-generated traffic would cause freeway segment LOS to degrade to unacceptable levels on Interstate 80 in 2025.
- 4.5-4 Project-generated traffic would cause one freeway ramp to degrade from acceptable to unacceptable LOS in 2025.
- 4.5-5 Traffic generated by the Proposed Project would cause LOS at diverge locations near freeway off-ramps to degrade to unacceptable levels in 2025.
- 4.6-1 Construction activities associated with the Proposed Project could generate substantial air pollutant emissions.
- 4.6-2 Daily operation of the project could generate substantial air pollutant emissions.
- 4.6-6 Implementation of the Proposed Project could release objectionable odors at the proposed manholes along the sewer main downstream of the pump station.
- 4.7-1 Construction activities associated with the Proposed Project development could generate temporary or periodic noise levels that exceed City standards.

- 4.7-2 Construction activities associated with the Proposed Project development could generate and expose persons to excessive groundborne vibration levels.
- 5.1-1 Cumulative development, including the Proposed Project, would result in the conversion of Important Farmland (Prime and Unique) to developed uses.
- 5.1-3 The Proposed Project would contribute to a cumulative alteration of aesthetic characteristics of the Lower Lagoon Valley region of Vacaville by increasing urban development in existing rural and undeveloped natural areas.
- 5.1-4 Cumulative development, including the Proposed Project, could contribute to an increase in nightlighting and overall light in this area of the City.
- 5.1-5 Cumulative traffic, including the Proposed Project, would result in further reductions in volume-to-capacity ratios at the Alamo Drive and Merchant Street intersection in the AM peak hour and at the North Texas Street/Manuel Campos Parkway intersection in 2025 in the AM and PM peak hours.
- 5.1-6 Cumulative traffic, including the Proposed Project, would result in further reductions in V/C ratios on the eastbound I-80 freeway segment between the Alamo Drive overcrossing and the Cherry Glen/Peña Adobe overcrossing in the PM peak hour in 2025.
- 5.1-7 Cumulative traffic, including the Proposed Project, would result in further reductions in V/C ratios on the Alamo Drive / Merchant Street ramps to I-80 in the AM and PM peak hours.
- 5.1-8 Cumulative traffic, including the Proposed Project, would further reduce the V/C ratio at the diverge from I-80 to the Alamo Drive / Merchant Street off-ramp.
- 5.1-28 Cumulative development, including the Proposed Project, could result in the disturbance of previously identified or unidentified prehistoric sites or historic archaeological features, paleontological resources or previously unidentified human remains.