

1.0 INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

Although not required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this introduction is included to provide the reader with an overview of the environmental review process being conducted by the City of Oxnard for the proposed RiverPark Project. The intent of this section is to familiarize the reader with the purpose, content, and format of this EIR and its relation to the planning process.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

Purpose of an EIR

Under State law, environmental review must be conducted for activities and approvals which involve discretionary actions. This law is entitled the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The first step in the CEQA process is to determine whether a proposed project is subject to CEQA. There are a number of statutory and categorical exemptions. If a project is subject to CEQA, the lead agency must determine if an EIR is required. The intent of an EIR is to accomplish several objectives as follows: (1) To disclose to decision makers and the public the significant environmental effects of proposed activities; (2) To identify ways to avoid or reduce environmental damage; (3) To prevent significant, avoidable environmental damage by requiring implementation of feasible alternatives or mitigation measures, and; (4) To disclose to the public reasons for agency approvals of projects with significant environmental effects. In later actions, the California legislature added two additional EIR objectives, as follows: (5) To foster inter-agency coordination; and (6) To enhance public participation.

To meet these objectives, an EIR contains information on what the environment is like today, and how that environment would change with implementation of the proposed action.

Environmental Processing

In accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the City of Oxnard conducted a preliminary review of the application for the proposed RiverPark Specific Plan Project and determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) should be prepared to analyze the potential impacts associated with the approval and implementation of the proposed project.

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) was prepared by the City of Oxnard in May 2000 and sent to public agencies and other parties stating that an EIR was going to be prepared by the City. In accordance with the requirements of CEQA, a 30-day period was provided for responses to the NOP. This review period ended in June 2000. In June 2001 the City sent out a revised NOP to reflect changes in the project description and provide additional opportunity for comment. The NOPs issued by the City and the comment letters received are contained in **Appendix 1.0** to this DEIR.

Based on the City's review of the project and consideration of the responses to the NOPs, this Draft EIR addresses all environmental topics identified in CEQA *Guidelines Appendix G* (Environmental Checklist Form) including:

- Land Use Planning, Programs & Policies
- Aesthetics
- Earth Resources
- Biological Resources
- Water Resources
- Agricultural Resources
- Transportation & Circulation
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Public Services
- Public Utilities
- Cultural Resources
- Hazards

This Draft EIR is being circulated for a 45-day public review period as required by state law. During this 45-day period, the City of Oxnard Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the Draft EIR and will accept oral testimony on the EIR from the public. In addition, the City will accept written comments during this 45-day period. After the close of the public review period, written responses will be prepared to all written and oral comments on the Draft EIR. These comments and responses, in combination with the text of the Draft EIR, will constitute the Final EIR. The City of Oxnard Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to review the Final EIR and consider its certification. The Final EIR must be certified as adequate and complete before any discretionary approvals are granted, or any discretionary actions to implement the project are taken by the City of Oxnard.

REPORT FORMAT

As stated, a principal objective of CEQA is that the environmental review process involve and inform the public. In meeting this objective, this EIR must inform members of the public and public officials responsible for reviewing and approving the projects, as well as other interested parties, of the physical impacts associated with the proposed project. Towards this end, specific features have been incorporated into this EIR to make it more understandable while providing the technical information necessary for the public as well as public officials.

As required by law, this EIR contains terminology specific to the CEQA process that is used throughout the document. “Baseline or existing conditions” means the environment as it exists today, “environmental impacts” are changes to the existing environment which would result from the project, while “mitigation measures” are ways the design, construction, or operation of the project could be modified to minimize potential impacts. Finally, “alternatives” are variations on the project which are considered as ways to minimize potential significant impacts, while being consistent with the primary objectives identified for the project. This EIR provides the general public and decision-makers the information necessary to visualize the future environment and make an informed decision which weighs the potential effects of the project against other relevant factors.

In order to provide a clear, accurate depiction of the potential effects associated with the project, the environmental evaluation is presented under separate headings based on the environmental issue under consideration. The format of this EIR and the general contents of each section are provided below to assist the reader in using this EIR. Sections of the Draft EIR following this introduction are organized as follows:

Section 2.0, Environmental Setting, includes a general description of the existing environmental characteristics of the region and local area to help orient the reader.

Section 3.0, Project Description, presents a detailed description of the proposed Project as required by the CEQA *Guidelines*. The topics addressed in this section include the project objectives, the characteristics of the project, uses of the EIR, and discretionary approvals required by the lead and responsible agencies for the project assessed in this document.

Section 4.0, Environmental Impact Analysis, contains analysis of each of the environmental topics addressed in this EIR. Each topic is addressed in separate subsections as follows: existing conditions;

project impacts; cumulative impacts; mitigation measures; and unavoidable significant impacts after mitigation.

Section 5.0, Alternatives, provides analysis of alternatives to the project. As required by the CEQA *Guidelines*, a discussion of the reasons for selection of the alternatives analyzed is provided with a comparative analysis of each alternative with the project.

Section 6.0, Growth Inducing Impact Analysis, addresses the physical and economic characteristics of the project which have the potential to induce growth in the surrounding environment.

Section 7.0, Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes, discusses the irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources that would occur as a result of approval of the project.

Section 8.0, References, lists all documents and persons contacted which were used as a basis of information for the Draft EIR.

Section 9.0, Organizations and Persons Consulted, provides a list of all persons and organizations contributing to the preparation of the Draft EIR.

Appendices to this EIR include the Notices of Preparation and technical studies and data supporting the analysis in the EIR.