

## 5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

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### INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) presents potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. The scope of the analysis and key attributes of the analytical approach are presented below to assist the reader in understanding the manner in which the impact analysis has been conducted in this Draft EIR.

### LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Draft EIR uses a variety of terms to describe the levels of significance of adverse impacts identified during the course of the environmental analysis. The following are definitions of terms used in this Draft EIR:

- **Significant and Unavoidable Impact.** Impacts that exceed the defined standards of significance and cannot be eliminated or reduced to a less than significant level through the implementation of feasible mitigation measures.
- **Significant Impact.** Impacts that exceed the defined standards of significance and that can be eliminated or reduced to a less than significant level through the implementation of feasible mitigation measures.
- **Potentially Significant Impact.** Significant impacts that may ultimately be determined to be less than significant; the level of significance may be reduced in the future through implementation of policies or guidelines (that are not required by statute or ordinance), or through further definition of the project detail in the future. Potentially Significant Impacts may also be impacts about which there is not enough information to draw a firm conclusion; however, for the purpose of this Draft EIR, they are considered significant. Such impacts are equivalent to Significant Impacts and require the identification of feasible mitigation measures.
- **Less Than Significant Impact.** Impacts that are adverse but that do not exceed the specified standards of significance.
- **No Impact.** The project would not create an impact.

## APPROACH TO IMPACT ANALYSIS

- The preparation of this Draft EIR was preceded by an Initial Study (included in **Appendix 1.0**), which determined that the proposed project would not result in significant or potentially significant impacts in certain resource areas. Therefore, this Draft EIR evaluates project impacts in seven of the 17 resource areas on the Appendix G California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) checklist.
- For each of the seven resource areas evaluated in the sections that follow, the Draft EIR describes the existing environmental setting, the potential for the proposed project to significantly affect the existing resources, and recommended mitigation measures that could reduce or avoid potentially significant impacts. Each of the resource sections also clearly identifies those impacts that were determined in the Initial Study to be less than significant, and thus, do not require detailed evaluation in this Draft EIR.
- For purposes of the analyses in this Draft EIR, the year 2013 is used to establish the baseline or existing conditions. Impacts, with the exception of traffic impacts, are evaluated in terms of environmental changes as a result of implementation of the proposed project as compared to existing conditions in 2013. Traffic impacts are evaluated in terms of environmental changes as a result of implementation of the proposed project as compared to baseline conditions, which consists of existing traffic plus anticipated traffic from approved developments.

## APPROACH TO CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

CEQA requires that EIRs discuss cumulative impacts, in addition to project-specific impacts. In accordance with CEQA, the discussion of cumulative impacts must reflect the severity of the impacts and the likelihood of their occurrence; however, the discussion need not be as detailed as the discussion of environmental impacts attributable to the project alone. According to Section 15355 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*:

*“Cumulative impacts” refer to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts.*

- (a) The individual effects may be changes resulting from a single project or a number of separate projects.*
- (b) The cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment which results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable probable future projects. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time.*

Section 15130(a)(1) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* further states that *“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.”*

Section 15130(a) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* also requires that EIRs discuss the cumulative impacts of a project when the project's incremental effect is "cumulatively considerable."<sup>1</sup> Where a Lead Agency is examining a project with an incremental effect that is not cumulatively considerable, it need not consider the effect significant but must briefly describe the basis for its conclusion. If the combined cumulative impact associated with the project's incremental effect and the effects of other projects is not significant, Section 15130(a)(2) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* requires a brief discussion in the EIR of why the cumulative impact is not significant and why it is not discussed in further detail. Section 15130(a)(3) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* requires supporting analysis in the EIR if a determination is made that a project's contribution to a significant cumulative impact is rendered less than cumulatively considerable and, therefore, is not significant. CEQA recognizes that the analysis of cumulative impacts need not be as detailed as the analysis of project-related impacts, but instead should "be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness."<sup>2</sup> The discussion of cumulative impacts in this draft EIR focuses on whether the impacts of the proposed project are cumulatively considerable.

The fact that a cumulative impact is significant does not necessarily mean that the project contribution to the cumulative impact is significant as well. Instead, under CEQA, a project-related contribution to a significant cumulative impact is only significant if the contribution is "cumulatively considerable." To support each significance conclusion, the Draft EIR provides a cumulative impact analysis; and where project-specific impacts have been identified that, together with the effects of other related projects, could result in cumulatively significant impacts, these potential impacts are documented.

Section 15130(b) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* defines consideration of the following two elements as necessary to provide an adequate discussion of cumulative impacts:

*(A) a list of past, present, and reasonably anticipated future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including those projects outside the control of the agency, or (B) a summary of projections contained in an adopted local, regional or statewide plan, or related planning document, that describes or evaluates conditions contributing to the cumulative effect. Such plans may include: a general plan, regional transportation plan, or plans for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.*

In this Draft EIR, a list of projects approved or anticipated to be approved in the near future in the vicinity of the project site is used to describe or evaluate conditions contributing to the cumulative effects. A brief description of these projects is provided below.

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<sup>1</sup> Under Section 15065(a)(3) of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, "cumulatively considerable" means that "the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects."

<sup>2</sup> *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15130(b)

## Major Projects

- **Sky Ranch II.** This project is located south of Buchanan Road and west of Somersville Road approximately 1.5 miles east of the proposed project. This project consists of 415 residential dwelling units located on a 163-acre site. This project was approved by the City of Pittsburg in 2007 and has yet to be constructed.
- **Black Diamond Ranch.** This project is located west of Somersville Road along both sides of James Donlon Boulevard about 2 miles east of the proposed project. This project consists of 286 residential dwelling units located on an approximate 125-acre site. This project was approved by the City of Antioch in 2004 and is currently under construction.
- **Tuscany Meadows.** This project is located south of Buchanan Road at Somersville Road approximately 2 miles northeast of the proposed project. This project consists of 917 single-family residential dwelling units and a maximum of 365 multi-family units located on an approximate 170-acre site. This project is currently pending approval from the City of Pittsburg.
- **James Donlon Boulevard Extension.** The project consists of a 1.71-mile extension of James Donlon Boulevard from Somersville Road to Kirker Pass Road. In addition, the project would include improvements to Kirker Pass Road from Nortonville Road north to the Pittsburg City limit. This project is currently pending approval from the City of Pittsburg.