The following is an introduction to the project-specific and cumulative environmental impacts analysis and general assumptions used in the analysis. The reader is referred to the individual technical sections of this Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) regarding specific assumptions, methodology, and significance criteria used in the analysis.

3.1 ANALYSIS ASSUMPTIONS GENERALLY USED TO EVALUATE THE IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

BASELINE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS ASSUMED IN THE DRAFT EIR

Section 15125(a) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires that an EIR include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published. The CEQA Guidelines also specify that this description of the physical environmental conditions is to serve as the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether impacts of a project are considered significant. The baseline analysis used in this EIR is based upon the existing operations of the facility (see **Table 2.1-1**).

The environmental setting conditions of the project site and the surrounding area are described in detail in the technical sections of the Draft EIR (see Sections 3.1 through 3.8). In general, these setting discussions describe the setting conditions of the project site and the surrounding area as they existed when the NOP for the project was released on May 18, 2011. In addition, the Draft EIR includes current information on the status of proposed and approved large-scale development projects in the region (see subsection 3.3, Approach to the Cumulative Impact Analysis, below).

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS

As required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d), each technical section of the Draft EIR (Sections 3.1 through 3.8) has been evaluated for consistency with policies contained in the existing City of Pittsburg General Plan (2001).

PROJECT CONSTRUCTION EFFECTS

Construction and installation of the proposed development and improvements would generate dust, equipment noise, water runoff, and increase or disrupt traffic. Project construction impacts specific to each area of environmental analysis are evaluated in the technical sections of the Draft EIR (Sections 3.1 through 3.8).

Project Buildout Assumptions

For the environmental analysis, it is assumed that construction/installation of the proposed development and improvements would occur on the project site as described in Section 2.0, Project Description. Project operational impacts, such as traffic, air quality, hydrology, biological resources, and hazards, are evaluated in the technical sections of the Draft EIR (Sections 3.1 through 3.8). The EIR generally relies on the buildout assumptions contained in the City of Pittsburg General Plan; however, other large-scale projects may also be considered in the cumulative context, as appropriate for the topic. **Table 3.0-1** includes the name, type of development, associated acreage, and status of other large-scale proposed and approved development projects in the area. The projects listed below located within the City limits were taken from the City's "Project Pipeline List" contained on its website. The location of each project is also described in **Table 3.0-1**. The cumulative setting also includes existing projects.

TABLE 3.0-1
PROPOSED AND APPROVED RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS IN THE CUMULATIVE STUDY AREA

Project	No. of Units	Site Acreage	Location	Status
Single-Family Residential				
Montreux	368	148.3	West of Kirker Pass, just south of city limits	Pending
Sky Ranch	415	163	Buchanan Road, west of Somersville Road	Approved
Sunnyside Estates	33	4.4	Carion Court	Pending
Tuscany Meadows	917	135.6	Buchanan Road, southwest of Somersville Road	Pending
Apartments/Condominiums				
Los Medanos Apartments	30	0.29	SE corner of Los Medanos & E. 9th Street	Approved
Esperanza Apartments (San Marco)	300	13.3	South of Leland Road, East of San Marco Boulevard	Pending
Tuscany Meadows	365	14.6	Buchanan Road, southwest of Somersville Road	Pending

TABLE 3.0-2
PROPOSED AND APPROVED NONRESIDENTIAL PROJECTS IN THE CUMULATIVE STUDY AREA

Project/Description	Bldg. Sq. Ft.	Site Acreage	Location	Status
Industrial				
ARB, Inc. Construction of an additional to an existing industrial use.	2,103 (add'n)	1.43	1875 Loveridge Road	Under Construction
Columbia Solar Construction of a 20-megawatt (MW) ground mounted solar photovoltaic array and related infrastructure.	–	115	900 Loveridge Road	Under Construction
K 2 Pure Establishment of a manufacturing plant for the production of electrochemical units.	40,000 +	15	901 Loveridge Road	Built
Long-Range Planning Projects				
James Donlon Blvd. Extension (Buchanan Bypass) & Southeast Hills Annexation, including General Plan Amendment and Rezoning. Construction of a new 1.71 mile long roadway south of the current City boundary.	–	TBD	South of the existing city limits and east of Kirker Pass Road	EIR Certified
Southwest Hills/Faria Annexation Annexation of undeveloped land into the City of Pittsburg, the Contra Costa Water District and the Delta Diablo Sanitation District.	–	606	Southwest Hills	Pending; NOP released on March 7, 2014. DEIR underway

Project/Description	Bldg. Sq. Ft.	Site Acreage	Location	Status
Keller Canyon Landfill Expansion Request amendment to existing land use permit to increase the daily tonnage limit, and other operational changes.	-	2,000	901 Bailey Road, Contra Costa County	Pending: NOP released in August 2009.

3.2 STRUCTURE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

Sections 3.1 through 3.8 of this Draft EIR contain a description of current setting conditions, the applicable regulatory framework, an evaluation of the direct and indirect environmental effects resulting from the implementation of the proposed project, identification of General Plan policies and Municipal Code sections that mitigate environmental effects, additional feasible mitigation measures, and identification of whether significant environmental effects of the project would remain after application of applicable policies and codes, and feasible mitigation measures. The individual technical sections of the Draft EIR include the information discussed below.

EXISTING SETTING

The subsection includes a description of the physical setting conditions associated with the technical area of discussion, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15125. As identified above, the existing setting is based on conditions as they existed when the NOP for the project was released on May 18, 2011.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This subsection consists of the identification of applicable federal, state, regional, and local plans, policies, laws, and regulations that apply to the technical area of discussion.

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The Impacts and Mitigation Measures subsection identifies direct and indirect environmental effects associated with implementation of the proposed project and identifies ways to mitigate environmental effects, as applicable. Standards of significance are identified and used to determine whether identified environmental effects are considered significant and require the application of mitigation measures. Each environmental impact analysis is identified numerically (e.g., Impact 3.3.1 – Hazard to the Public Through Routine Transport, Use, or Disposal of Hazardous Materials) and is supported by substantial evidence included in the discussion.

Mitigation measures for the proposed project were developed through a thorough review of the environmental effects of the project site by consultants with technical expertise as well as by environmental professionals. The mitigation measures identified consist of performance standards that identify clear requirements that would avoid or minimize significant environmental effects. The use of performance standard mitigation is allowed under CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a) and is supported by case law (*Sacramento Old City Association v. City Council of Sacramento* [3d. Dist 1991] 229 Cal.App.3d 1011, 1028 [280 Cal.Rptr. 478]).

3.3 APPROACH TO THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

DEFINITION OF CUMULATIVE SETTING

CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 requires that EIRs include an analysis of the cumulative impacts of a project when the project's effect is considered cumulatively considerable. In general, the cumulative setting conditions considered in this Draft EIR are based on the City's existing land use plans (General Plan and Zoning Ordinance). The project site contains approximately 36 acres and encompasses parcels that are currently designated in the General Plan as Industrial and zoned IG (General Industrial) District and IL (Limited Industrial) District. Additional discussion regarding land use and zoning consistency is included in Section 2.0, Project Description, and Section 3.5, Land Use, of this Draft EIR.

Cumulative setting conditions also consider existing, proposed, approved, and reasonably foreseeable large-scale development projects in the project vicinity, as listed in **Tables 3.0-1** and **3.0-2**, in the analysis of the Draft EIR**.** These lists are intended to describe large-scale development activities in the vicinity of the project (cumulative study area) and are not intended to be an all-inclusive list of projects in the City of Pittsburg and adjacent jurisdictions.

The cumulative setting varies for each environmental issue area, depending upon the resources affected and any relevant boundaries. For example, some issue areas such as hazards have relatively site-specific impact potential, while other resource areas such as air quality are studied on a regional basis, covering the entire air basin within which a proposed project lies. Each technical section of the Draft EIR includes a description of the geographic extent of the applicable cumulative setting, based on the characteristics of the environmental issues under consideration as set forth in Section 15130(b) of the CEQA Guidelines.

CONSIDERATION OF CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Each technical section in the Draft EIR includes a description of the cumulative setting geographic extent based on the characteristics of the environmental issue under consideration as set forth in Section 15130(b) of the CEQA Guidelines. Each section also considers whether the project's contribution to anticipated significant environmental effects that would occur under cumulative setting conditions is cumulatively considerable (i.e., a significant effect).

"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 (CEQA Guidelines Section 15065(a)(3)). Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time (CEQA Guidelines Section 15355(b)). The determination of whether the project's impact on cumulative conditions is considerable is based on a number of factors, including consideration of applicable public agency standards, consultation with public agencies, and expert opinion. Section 4.0, Cumulative Impacts, provides a summary of the cumulative impacts associated with the proposed project. Cumulative impacts are based on the project's contribution to development compared with cumulative baseline conditions.

3.4 COMMON TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE DRAFT EIR

Identified below are common terms used throughout this document.

CEQA TERMINOLOGY

Cumulatively Considerable Impact: 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.

Less Than Cumulatively Considerable Impact: A less than cumulatively considerable impact results when the incremental effects of an individual project would not contribute significantly to a cumulative impact.

Less Than Significant Impact: A less than significant impact would cause no substantial change in the environment and no mitigation would be required.

No Impact: No adverse change to the environment would occur.

Potentially Significant Impact: A potentially significant impact is one that may or may not occur and where a definite determination cannot be made. Feasible mitigation measures and/or project alternatives are identified to avoid or reduce the project's effects on the environment to a less than significant level.

Significant Impact: A significant impact would cause (or would potentially cause) a substantial adverse change in the physical conditions of the environment. Significant impacts are identified by the evaluation of project effects using specified standards of significance. Mitigation measures and/or project alternatives are identified to reduce project effects on the environment.

Significant and Unavoidable Impact: A significant and unavoidable impact would result in a substantial change in the environment that cannot be avoided or mitigated to a less than significant level if the project is implemented.

Standards of Significance: A set of criteria used by the lead agency to determine at what level or "threshold" an impact would be considered significant. Significance criteria used in this EIR include the State CEQA Guidelines; factual or scientific information; regulatory performance standards of local, state, and federal agencies; and City goals, objectives, and policies.

GENERAL TERMINOLOGY

City: City of Pittsburg.

Applicant: Any person or other legal entity who applies to the City to develop or improve any portion of the real property within the project boundaries. The term "applicant" shall include all successors in interest. The applicant for this project is Contra Costa Waste Service, Inc.

Project: The development or improvement of the project site, as defined by the project application and set forth in the Project Description. May also be referred to as the proposed project.

Project Site: The real property described by the project application. The project site in this EIR is a 36 acre area located at 1300 Loveridge Road in the City of Pittsburg.

3.5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORTS UTILIZED IN THIS EIR

This Draft EIR utilizes technical information and analyses from previously prepared environmental documents that are relevant to the consideration of environmental effects of the proposed project, which is supported by the CEQA Guidelines (see Sections 15148 [Citation] and 15150 [Incorporation by Reference]). These environmental documents are incorporated into this EIR by reference. By utilizing provisions of the CEQA Guidelines, the City, in preparing this Draft EIR, has been able to make maximum feasible and appropriate use of the technical information in these environmental documents. These documents and other referenced materials are available for review upon request at the City of Pittsburg Planning Division at 65 Civic Avenue, Pittsburg, California 94565. In addition to the materials cited, the following documents have been utilized in this Draft EIR:

- City of Pittsburg General Plan EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 1999072109)
- Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station Area Specific Plan EIR (Recirculated) (State Clearinghouse No. 2010122023)
- Recycling Center and Transfer Station Final EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 94063017)
- Columbia Solar Project Mitigated Negative Declaration (State Clearinghouse No. 2013012038) (**Appendix D**)

3.6 CHANGES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT SINCE CIRCULATION OF THE NOP

The project description in the Notice of Preparation on May 18, 2011 stated that all project-related activities would remain within the existing facility footprint. Since that time, the project applicant has finalized a design capacity study indicating that additional area would be needed to efficiently operate the facility. Therefore, the project applicant has added to the project 18.5 acres of land adjacent to the existing site and made revisions to the proposed site plan including relocating the BGU and organics processing operations area (future phase) to the northwesterly portion of the site and adding a truck maintenance facility and yard in the southeasterly corner. The remaining portions of the 18.5 acres would be used for parking, vehicle and equipment storage, and containerized commodity storage.

The additional 18.5 acres can be described as four separate areas: the 3.5-acre former GWF facility, an approximately 5-acre portion that is currently surfaced with compacted gravel used by Contra Costa Waste Services for storage and parking, and two undeveloped areas (approximately 2.5 acres and 7.5 acres), both of which have been analyzed for development in the Columbia Solar Project Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND; SCH# 2013012038; **Appendix D**). These areas are discussed further below.

The former GWF site is almost entirely paved and all improvements associated with the former operation have been removed since publication of the NOP. Because the site is almost entirely paved, the redevelopment of the site as a truck maintenance facility and yard would not result in a substantial change from existing conditions with regard to footprint-related effects on this site.

The central 5-acre portion of the addition is currently being used by Contra Costa Waste Services for storage and parking, so the use of that site would not change from existing conditions.

COLUMBIA SOLAR PROJECT MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

The Columbia Solar Project Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) analyzed the potential environmental impacts on the Columbia Solar site, which included 15 acres of land that is part of the proposed project but is not currently part of the existing facility (see **Figure 3.0-1** and **Appendix D**). The City Council found, based on the analysis in the MND and the record before it, that there was no substantial evidence that the Columbia Solar Project would have a significant effect on the environment and adopted the MND on May 6, 2013. The Columbia Solar Project included ground disturbance (redistribution and smoothing of surface soils, gravel surfacing for roads, substation and surrounding areas), minor grading, pouring of various concrete foundations to support equipment, and installation of solar panels and an electrical substation on the site. The proposed project would include smoothing/leveling of surface soils and addition of gravel or paving for storage of equipment and commodities as well as minor grading and pouring of a 4,000 square foot concrete pad to support the proposed BGU. These improvements would not differ substantially from the assumptions under the Columbia Solar Project. Therefore, the Columbia Solar Project Mitigated Negative Declaration adequately describes footprint-related effects on this portion of the project site.

The following resource areas were adequately addressed in the MND, as discussed below, and these topics are not addressed further in this Draft EIR. Potential effects related to other resource areas are addressed in the appropriate technical sections of this Draft EIR.

Aesthetics

The MND determined that development on the site would not substantially affect a scenic vista, damage scenic resources, degrade the character of the site, or result in substantial light or glare. The MND considered the development of solar panels up to 22 feet tall, a static mast at 50 feet tall and towers approximately 60 to 90 feet tall. The MND determined that the height, bulk, pattern, scale, and character of the solar project would not conflict with the visual character of the existing surrounding predominately industrial land uses. The proposed project would use the site for parking, equipment and commodity storage, an organic processing operations area, and a biomass gasification unit. These proposed uses would not exceed the proposed heights analyzed in the MND and would have a similar industrial character. The MND concluded that the solar project would also be consistent with the industrial character of the area and that the aesthetic impacts of the solar project would, therefore, be less than significant.

Agricultural Resources

The project site is not zoned for agriculture, is not under a Williamson Act Contract, and contains no farmland. The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), administered by the California Department of Conservation (DOC), designates the entire project area as Urban and Built-Up Land. The project site does not contain trees or forest land. Therefore, there would be no impact with respect to forest or agricultural resources.

Cultural Resources

The portion of the project site analyzed in the MND, has no building or structures, and a historic aerial map review indicated that no previous structures were built within the project footprint. There would be no impact on historic structures.

A cultural resource records search was conducted through the Northwest Information Center for the Columbia Solar Project, which found no previously recorded cultural resources within the project boundaries and no known prehistoric archaeological sites within a one mile radius. A search of the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) Sacred Lands File failed to indicate the presence of Native American cultural resources in the immediate project area. The portions of the project site reviewed under the MND have been intensively disturbed by landfilling activities from 1939 to 1992 and by solid waste management unit remediation activities approved by the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) with a Corrective Action Measures Completion Report submitted in 2005. Historically, the entire Project site was utilized to dispose of industrial waste materials including slag, scale, dried sludge, construction debris, and other wastes. Due to its history of intensive surface and subsurface disturbance native soil horizons that could contain significant archaeological resources are not anticipated to be encountered and there would be no impact. Similarly, native soil horizons that could contain significant paleontological resources are not anticipated to be encountered during project construction due to the previously disturbed nature of the site and because there would be minimal grading in conjunction with the proposed project.

A cultural resource records search was conducted through the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) Northwest Information Center and search of the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) Sacred Lands File did not indicate any known burials within the project area, or within one mile of the project area and failed to indicate the presence of Native American cultural resources in the immediate project area.

Geology and Soils

There is no active or potentially active fault zone, Seismic Hazard Zone, or Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone on the site or surrounding areas, so there is no evidence of a potential earthquake fault rupture hazard. The closest active fault is the Clayton segment of the Clayton-Marsh Creek-Greenville Fault, located more than six miles to the southwest. Other major faults in the region include the Green Valley/Concord Fault (10 miles west), Calaveras Fault (15 miles west), Rogers Creek Fault Zone (27 miles west), Hayward Fault Zone (28 miles west), and the San Andreas Fault Zone (41 miles west). Strong ground motions could occur in the vicinity of the project from an earthquake on any of these regional faults. Strong seismic ground shaking would be a potentially substantial seismic hazard if structures are not appropriately designed. The potential for seismic ground motions to damage structures is mitigated through proper design and construction to withstand predicted ground motions, codified in the California Building Code seismic standards. The California Building Code seismic standards are designed to mitigate the potential for people or structures to be exposed to substantial risks from seismically-induced ground motions. Conformance with this code would be assured through the Building Permit process of the City of Pittsburg. Adherence to City and California Building Code requirements would limit the risk of damage or injury from seismic ground shaking to level that is less than significant.

Similarly, geological hazards due to other soil constraints, such as clay soils, soil collapse, expansive soils, liquefaction or lateral spreading would be mitigated through compliance with California Building Code requirements. In addition, the project site is generally flat, so it would not result in landslides, loss of topsoil, or substantial soil erosion. Due to site conditions and adherence to City and California Building Code requirements, impacts related to geology would be less than significant.

FIGURE 3.0-1
AREA ANALYZED IN THE COLUMBIA SOLAR PROJECT MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Page 2

Mineral Resources

The Project site area is classified by the California Department of Conservation as Mineral Resource Zone (MRZ)-1. This designation means that the State has determined adequate information exists to indicate "that no significant mineral deposits are present" or to judge that "little likelihood exists for their presence." No important mineral resources have been identified on the project site, so there would be no impact related to mineral resources.