
18. CEQA-REQUIRED ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter summarizes the EIR findings in terms of the various assessment categories suggested by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines for EIR content. The findings of this EIR are summarized below in terms of project-related potential "growth-inducing effects," "significant unavoidable impacts," "irreversible environmental changes," and "cumulative impacts."

18.1 GROWTH-INDUCING EFFECTS

CEQA Guidelines section 15126.2(d) requires that the EIR discuss "...the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment."

The approximately 42-acre Hercules Bayfront Project site is the last portion of the 167-acre Hercules Waterfront District Master Plan area planned for development. Project-proposed residential development would produce a maximum of approximately 1,526 new multi-family residential units. These housing units would accommodate up to approximately 4,624 new residents, assuming an average of 3.03 people per household (the current [2010] ABAG-estimated household size for Hercules). Based on standard job rates for retail and office areas, the proposed retail, office, and "flex-space" uses would provide jobs for an estimated 1,061 employees on the project site.¹ Project development would also extend roads and other infrastructure to the site.

The estimated population increase of 4,624 residents would represent approximately 13.2 percent of the ABAG-projected year 2035 population total of 34,900 for Hercules and approximately 0.3 percent of the ABAG-projected 2035 population total of 1,322,900 for Contra Costa County as a whole. The approximately 1,061 jobs produced by the project would represent about 19.0 percent of the ABAG-projected 2035 job total of 5,610 for Hercules and less than 0.1 percent of the ABAG-projected 2035 job total of 555,650 for the county as a whole.

Population and housing growth associated with the project would be based on the land use provisions of the Hercules General Plan and in and of itself would represent a less-than-significant impact. The project-related household and population increases and infrastructure extensions would contribute to associated potentially significant project and cumulative physical (environmental) impacts, including significant cumulative transportation and air quality impacts. These related impacts and associated mitigation measures are described in detail in chapters 4 through 16 of this EIR.

¹ Job estimates are based on the non-residential square footages listed in subsection 14.3.2 of this EIR and the following job rates: 1 employee per 450 square feet of retail space and 1 employee per 350 square feet of office space.

To a lesser degree, secondary growth-inducing impacts (the "multiplier" effect) could also be expected in other portions of the County and subregion. Such growth-inducing land use impacts of the project would occur in the form of future individual development proposals and associated applications. The majority of this primary and secondary growth inducement would be expected to occur in a manner consistent with the Hercules General Plan and other adopted local general plans.

Based on these considerations, no substantial, detrimental growth-inducing effect is expected. With the exception of CEQA-exempt projects, any such future individual development proposals not included in the proposed project would require routine local review of associated development applications, including CEQA-mandated development-specific environmental review, to ensure that any adverse environmental impacts are adequately addressed. These existing requirements and procedures would be expected to reduce the environmental impacts of such secondary growth-inducement associated with the project to less-than-significant levels, except where specific statements of overriding consideration are adopted.

18.2 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

CEQA Guidelines section 15126.2(b) requires that the EIR discuss "significant environmental effects which cannot be avoided if the proposed project is implemented." Significant unavoidable impacts are those that would not be reduced to less-than-significant levels by the mitigation measures recommended in this EIR.

Mitigation measures have been identified to reduce identified significant and potentially significant effects associated with the proposed project to less-than-significant levels, with the exception of the following significant unavoidable impacts:

- **Impact 4-1: Project Impact on Scenic Vistas** (see chapter 4--Aesthetics--of this EIR);
- **Impact 4-2: Project Impact on the Existing Visual Character of the Site and its Surroundings** (see chapter 4--Aesthetics--of this EIR);
- **Impact 5-2: Long-Term Regional Emissions Increases** (see chapter 5--Air Quality--of this EIR);
- **Impact 13-1: Project-Facilitated Construction Period Noise** (see chapter 13--Noise--of this EIR);
- **Impact 16-1: Existing Plus Project Impacts on Freeway Facilities Operations** (see chapter 16--Transportation and Circulation--of this EIR);
- **Impact 16-2: Cumulative Plus Project Impacts on Intersection Operations** (see chapter 16--Transportation and Circulation--of this EIR); and
- **Impact 16-3: Cumulative Plus Project Impacts on Freeway Operations** (see chapter 16--Transportation and Circulation--of this EIR).

18.3 IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

CEQA Guidelines section 15126.2(c) requires that the EIR discuss "significant irreversible environmental changes which would be caused by the proposed project should it be implemented." Irreversible environmental changes caused by the proposed project would include the following:

- As discussed in chapter 12 (Land Use and Planning) of this EIR, the project would convert the project site from substantially vacant, undeveloped land to a transit-oriented, mixed-use neighborhood.
- The project would permanently alter on-site and off-site views of the project site, as discussed in chapter 4 (Aesthetics) of this EIR.
- The project would result in loss of existing plant and wildlife habitat, as described in chapter 6 (Biological Resources).

Implementation of the proposed project would result in an irreversible commitment of energy resources, primarily in the form of fossil fuels, including fuel oil, natural gas, and gasoline or diesel fuel for construction equipment and automobiles during construction and ongoing use of the project site. Because residential, retail, and office development proposed by the project would be required by law to comply with California Code of Regulations Title 24 and adopted City energy conservation ordinances and regulations, the project would not be expected to use energy in a wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary manner.

The consumption or destruction of other non-renewable or slowly renewable resources would also result during construction, occupancy, and use of individual development sites under the project. These resources would include, but would not be limited to, lumber, concrete, sand, gravel, asphalt, masonry, metals, and water. Project development would also irreversibly use water and solid waste landfill resources. However, development under the project would not involve a large commitment of those resources relative to supply, nor would it consume any of those resources wastefully, inefficiently, or unnecessarily, especially considering ongoing City and County conservation and recycling programs.

Project development would contribute both directly and indirectly to long-term increases in greenhouse gas emissions, albeit to a lesser extent than if the same growth and development were to occur away from existing and planned transit services (including the existing nearby park-and-ride facility and the adjacent planned Intermodal Transit Center).

For practical purposes, these environmental changes would be permanent and irreversible.

18.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Section 15130(a) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that the EIR "discuss cumulative impacts of a project when the project's incremental effect is cumulatively considerable...." The CEQA Guidelines (section 15355) define "cumulative impacts" as "...two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts."

Additional, reasonably foreseeable development projects in the project vicinity are identified in chapter 12 (Land Use and Planning) of this EIR. In conjunction with these reasonably foreseeable projects, the proposed Hercules Bayfront Project, as described in EIR chapter 3 (Project Description), would cause the following significant cumulative impacts, each of which is discussed in its respective, identified EIR chapter:

- **Impact 5-2: Long-Term Regional Emissions Increases** (see chapter 5--Air Quality--of this EIR);
- **Impact 16-2: Cumulative Plus Project Impacts on Intersection Operations** (see chapter 16--Transportation and Circulation--of this EIR); and
- **Impact 16-3: Cumulative Plus Project Impacts on Freeway Operations** (see chapter 16--Transportation and Circulation--of this EIR).

Each of these cumulative impacts has been identified as a *significant unavoidable impact*, as described in section 18.2 above.

18.5 EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

Section 15128 of the CEQA Guidelines requires that the EIR "contain a statement briefly indicating the reasons that various possible significant effects of a project were determined not to be significant and were therefore not discussed in detail in the EIR." This EIR discusses all of the environmental topic areas included in CEQA Guidelines Appendix G (Environmental Checklist Form), with the potential significance of each impact evaluated in the appropriate EIR chapter (e.g., chapter 4--Aesthetics, chapter 5--Air Quality, etc.), with the exception of the following environmental topics:

- **Agricultural Resources (item II in CEQA Appendix G):** No agricultural uses are located on the project site. According to the Contra Costa County Important Farmlands Map, the project site does not contain Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. No portion of the project site is zoned for agricultural use, nor is any portion of the site under a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in any impact on farmland.
- **Mineral Resources (item X in CEQA Appendix G):** According to the Hercules General Plan, no significant mineral deposits are identified in the Hercules area, including the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in any impact on mineral resources.