
CHAPTER 3 Environmental Analysis

3.0 INTRODUCTION TO ANALYSIS

Section 3.1 through Section 3.15 of Chapter 3 of this EIR contain a discussion of the potential environmental impacts of implementation of the Proposed Project, including information related to existing site conditions, analyses of the type and magnitude of individual and cumulative environmental impacts, and feasible mitigation measures that could reduce or avoid environmental impacts.

3.0.1 Scope of the Environmental Impact Analysis

The Lake Forest Opportunities Study Program EIR is a program-level environmental assessment that evaluates the effects of implementation of the proposed development, including both construction and operational activities. In accordance with the City's CEQA Significance Thresholds Guide and Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Project are analyzed for the following environmental issue areas:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

3.0.2 Format of the Environmental Analysis

■ Environmental Setting

According to Section 15125 of the CEQA Guidelines, an EIR must include a description of the existing physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project to provide the "baseline condition" against which project-related impacts are compared. The baseline condition is determined at the time when the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published or at the time analysis of potential impacts is commenced. For the Proposed Project, the baseline conditions represent mostly undeveloped land in the

Project Area. It should be noted that the land under consideration for the Proposed Project, while currently undeveloped, would not necessarily remain undeveloped. Some Project Area sites are subject to existing Development Agreements and, in the absence of the Proposed Project, would in the future likely be developed with approximately 9.8 million square feet of industrial and commercial space under the existing General Plan. Given this, the analysis of alternatives to the Proposed Project in Chapter 4 of this EIR, under the “No Project/Reasonably Foreseeable Development alternative, analyzes the potential environmental impacts associated with buildout of the existing General Plan. That analysis includes a comparison of the impacts of buildout of the existing General Plan with the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Project.

For purposes of this EIR, except when discussing the entire City of Lake Forest and its geographic relationship to its neighbors, directions (i.e., north, south, east, and west) are not identified as true compass directions. Rather, directions are described relative to the Project Area as if north were the upper boundary of Figure 2-3. El Toro Road, Bake Parkway, and Lake Forest Drive are assumed to run north/south, and SR-241 runs east/west.

■ **Planning and Regulatory Framework**

The Planning and Regulatory Framework provides a summary of regulations, plans, policies, and laws that are relevant to each issue area.

■ **Methodology**

This subsection identifies the methodology used to analyze potential environmental impacts.

■ **Thresholds of Significance**

Thresholds of significance are criteria used to determine whether potential environmental effects are significant. The thresholds of significance used in this analysis were primarily based upon Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines; however, the City has also determined that six issues should receive additional consideration. As such, the City has prepared the “City of Lake Forest CEQA Significance Thresholds Guide,” to establish Significance Thresholds for Traffic, Noise, Air Quality, Land Use, Aesthetics and Water Resources. Both Appendix G and the City’s Guide define the type, amount, and/or extent of impact that would be considered a significant adverse change in the environment. Some thresholds (such as air quality, traffic, and noise) are quantitative, while others, such as visual quality, are qualitative. The thresholds are intended to assist the reader in understanding how and why the EIR reaches a conclusion that an impact is significant or less than significant.

Thresholds of significance that are listed in this section are only those that are fully analyzed in this EIR, and they are provided both in the “Thresholds of Significance” section and immediately before the relevant impact analysis for ease of correlation. Thresholds for potential environmental impacts that, as a result of the EIR scoping process, have been determined to be “Effects Not Found to Be Significant,” are not listed in this section. They are, however, provided in the section entitled “Effects Not Found to Be Significant.”

■ Project Impacts

This section describes the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Project and, based upon the thresholds of significance, concludes whether the environmental impacts would be considered significant and unavoidable, potentially significant but mitigable, or less than significant. Each impact is summarized in an “impact statement,” followed by a more detailed discussion of the potential impacts and the significance of each impact before mitigation. This section also includes feasible mitigation measures that could reduce the severity of the impact. In addition to feasible mitigation measures (MMs), the City will also continue to comply with all applicable local, State, and federal laws and regulations, and these laws and regulations are considered to be part of the project description. Following the description of MMs, the section concludes with a statement regarding whether the impact, following implementation of the MMs or compliance with existing local, State, and federal laws and regulations, would remain significant, and thus be significant and unavoidable, or would be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

The analysis of environmental impacts considers both the construction and operational phases associated with implementation of the Proposed Project. As required by Section 15126.2(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, direct, indirect, short-term, long-term, on-site, and/or off-site impacts are addressed, as appropriate, for each environmental issue area analyzed. Impacts are determined when comparing the Proposed Project to existing conditions.

The Draft EIR uses the following terms to describe the level of significance of environmental impacts identified during the course of the environmental analysis:

- **Significant and Unavoidable Impact (SU)**—Impact that exceeds the defined threshold(s) of significance after the consideration of feasible mitigation measures
- **Potentially Significant Impact (PS)**—Impact that exceeds the defined threshold(s) of significance and can be eliminated or reduced to a less-than-significant level through the implementation of feasible mitigation measures
- **Less-Than-Significant Impact (LS)**—Impact that does not exceed the defined threshold(s) of significance

A “significant effect” is defined by Section 15382 of the CEQA Guidelines as “a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment ... [but] may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant.”

Each impact type discussion is separately numbered and includes a brief impact statement that summarizes the subject of the analysis. This format is designed to assist the reader in quickly identifying the subject of the impact analyses and for use in Table ES-2 (Summary of Environmental Effects and Mitigation Measures), which will be utilized as part of the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

■ Mitigation Measures

As required by Section 15126.4(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, all feasible mitigation measures are identified that could avoid or lessen the significant adverse effects of the Proposed Project. The mitigation

measures will be made fully enforceable through permit conditions, agreements, or other legally binding instruments, and are consistent with all applicable constitutional requirements described in Section 15126.4(a)(4) of the CEQA Guidelines.

■ **Summary of Impacts**

The Summary of Impacts identifies the level of significance for each threshold of significance analyzed in the environmental analysis (after the incorporation of all feasible mitigation measures) for the Proposed Project compared to existing conditions.

■ **References**

This section identifies sources relied upon for each environmental topic area analyzed in this document (Sections 3.1 through 3.15).