

**1**

**INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 PURPOSE AND INTENDED USES OF THIS EIR**

---

The Mace Ranch Innovation Center (MRIC) Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA) as amended. The City of Davis is the lead agency for the environmental review of the proposed project evaluated herein and has the principal responsibility for approving the project. As required by Section 15121 of the CEQA Guidelines, this EIR will (a) inform public agency decision-makers, and the public generally, of the significant environmental effects of the project, (b) identify possible ways to minimize the significant adverse environmental effects, and (c) describe reasonable and feasible project alternatives which reduce environmental effects. The public agency shall consider the information in the Draft EIR along with other information that may be presented to the agency.

As provided in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15021, public agencies are charged with the duty to avoid or minimize environmental damage where feasible. The public agency has an obligation to balance a variety of public objectives, including economic, environmental, and social issues. CEQA requires the preparation of an EIR prior to approving any project that may have a significant effect on the environment. For the purposes of CEQA, the term *project* refers to the whole of an action, which has the potential for resulting in a direct physical change or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378[a]). With respect to the proposed project, the City has determined that the proposed development is a *project* within the definition of CEQA, which has the potential for resulting in significant environmental effects.

The EIR is an informational document that appraises decision-makers and the general public of the potential significant environmental effects of a proposed project. An EIR must describe a reasonable range of feasible alternatives to the project and identify possible means to minimize the significant effects. The lead agency, which is the City of Davis for this project, is required to consider the information in the EIR along with any other available information in deciding whether to approve the application. The basic requirements for an EIR include discussions of the environmental setting, environmental impacts, mitigation measures, alternatives, growth inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts.

**1.2 PROPOSED PROJECT**

---

This section provides an overview of the project location and components. For additional project description details, please refer to Chapter 3, Project Description, of this EIR.

## **Project Location**

The proposed project would be located immediately east of the City of Davis city limits, near the “Mace Curve”, in Yolo County, approximately 2.5 miles east of downtown Davis. Regional access to the project site is provided by the Interstate 80/Mace Boulevard interchange, located southwest of the project site. Mace Boulevard makes up the western boundary of the overall project site. The MRIC and Mace Triangle Sites are bisected by County Road 32A, which becomes 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, west of Mace Boulevard. The MRIC site is identified by Assessor’s Parcel Numbers (APNs) 033-630-009; 033-650-009, and -026. The Mace Triangle site is identified by APNs 033-630-006; -011; and -012.

## **Project Components**

The proposed project consists of two components: phased development on an Innovation Center on the MRIC site and future development of the Mace Triangle site at the southwest corner. The MRIC component of the proposed project would consist of development of up to approximately 2,654,000 square feet of innovation center uses, of which up to 260,000 square feet (10 percent) may be developed with supportive commercial uses. The 260,000 square feet of supportive commercial uses is anticipated to include 160,000 square feet of hotel/conference center use and 100,000 square feet of supportive retail throughout the MRIC, most of which would be located on the ground floor of the proposed research/office/research and development (R&D) uses. The ancillary retail space within the innovation park is intended to provide employees and visitors with basic convenience shopping and dining opportunities in close proximity to the businesses, as well as fitness center amenities.

The proposed MRIC would incorporate several privately maintained parks and open space areas throughout the site, totaling approximately 64.6 acres of green space. The park and open space areas would include greenways, commons, courtyards, orchards, and plazas. The greenways and open spaces would be anchored by a 5.1-acre recreational park (“the Oval”), which would be privately maintained but made available for public use.

The Mace Triangle component of the project would be developed in a mix of general commercial uses. The EIR assumes development of up to 71,056 square feet of general commercial uses including up to 45,900 of research, office, and R&D, and up to 25,155 square feet of retail. The City of Davis has included the Mace Triangle within the overall project boundaries to ensure that an agricultural and unincorporated island is not created and to allow the continuation and expansion of existing uses. This EIR evaluates the potential for expansion of the Ikeda farm stand and additional urban development on the Ikeda’s parcel and adjacent agricultural parcel.

### **1.3 EIR PROCESS**

---

The EIR process begins with the decision by the lead agency to prepare an EIR, either during a preliminary review of a project or at the conclusion of an Initial Study. Once the decision is made to prepare an EIR, the lead agency sends a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to appropriate government agencies and, when required, to the State Clearinghouse (SCH) in the Office of

Planning and Research (OPR), which will ensure that responsible and trustee State agencies reply within the required time. The SCH assigns an identification number to the project, which then becomes the identification number for all subsequent environmental documents on the project. Commenting agencies have 30 days to respond to the NOP and provide information regarding alternatives and mitigation measures they wish to have explored in the Draft EIR and to provide notification regarding whether the agency will be a responsible agency or a trustee agency for the project. An NOP (see Appendix A) was prepared for the proposed project and was circulated from November 6, 2014 to December 8, 2014. A public scoping meeting was held on November 17, 2014 for the purpose of informing the public and receiving comments on the scope of the environmental analysis to be prepared for the proposed project. See Section 1.5 below for a summary of comments received on the NOP.

As soon as the Draft EIR is completed, a notice of completion will be filed with the SCH and a public notice of availability (incorporated herein) will be published to inform interested parties that a Draft EIR is available for agency and public review. In addition, the notice provides information regarding the location of copies of the Draft EIR available for public review and any public meetings or hearings that are scheduled. The Draft EIR will be circulated for a period of 45 days, during which time reviewers may make comments. The lead agency must respond to comments in writing, describing the disposition of any significant environmental issues raised and explaining in detail the reasons for not accepting any specific comments concerning major environmental issues. A public meeting before the Davis Planning Commission will be held September 9, 2015 (see NOA for details) in order to receive verbal comments on the Draft EIR. If significant new information, as defined in CEQA Guidelines section 15088.5, is added to an EIR after public notice of availability is given but before certification of the EIR, the revised EIR or affected chapters must be recirculated for an additional public review period with related comments and responses.

A Final EIR will be prepared, containing the Draft EIR or a revision thereof as well as comments and responses to comments on the Draft EIR. Before approving a project, the lead agency shall certify that the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, and that the Final EIR has been presented to the decision-making body of the lead agency, which has reviewed and considered the EIR. The lead agency shall also certify that the Final EIR reflects the lead agency's independent judgment and analysis.

The findings prepared by the lead agency must be based on substantial evidence in the administrative record and must include an explanation that bridges the gap between evidence in the record and the conclusions required by CEQA. If the decision-making body elects to proceed with a project that would have unavoidable significant impacts, then a Statement of Overriding Considerations explaining the decision to balance the benefits of the project against unavoidable environmental impacts must be prepared.

This EIR constitutes a project-level analysis for both the MRIC and the Mace Triangle, and pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15161, covers "all phases of the project including planning, construction, and operation." State CEQA Guidelines § 15126.2(a) states, in pertinent part:

An EIR shall identify and focus on the significant environmental effects of the proposed project. In assessing the impact of a proposed project on the environment, the lead agency should normally limit its examination to changes in the existing physical conditions in the affected area as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published, or where no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced.

For the purposes of this EIR, references to the proposed project include development of both the MRIC and the Mace Triangle.

#### **1.4 SCOPE OF THE DRAFT EIR**

---

This Draft EIR constitutes a project-level analysis, and pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15161, covers “all phases of the project including planning, construction, and operation.” The proposed project, in the case of this EIR, includes both the MRIC and Mace Triangle. State CEQA Guidelines § 15126.2(a) states, in pertinent part:

An EIR shall identify and focus on the significant environmental effects of the proposed project. In assessing the impact of a proposed project on the environment, the lead agency should normally limit its examination to changes in the existing physical conditions in the affected area as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published, or where no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced.

Resources identified for study in this Draft EIR include:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources;
- Agriculture and Forest Resources;
- Air Quality;
- Biological Resources;
- Cultural Resources;
- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources;
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Energy;
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
- Hydrology and Water Quality;
- Land Use and Urban Decay;
- Noise and Vibration;
- Population and Housing;
- Public Services and Recreation;
- Transportation and Circulation; and
- Utilities.

The evaluation of effects is presented on a resource-by-resource basis in Sections 4.1 through 4.15. Each section is divided into the following four sections: Introduction, Existing Environmental Setting, Regulatory Context, and Impacts and Mitigation Measures.

Impacts that are determined to be significant in Sections 4.1 through 4.15, and for which feasible mitigation measures are not available to reduce those impacts to a less-than-significant level, are identified as *significant and unavoidable*. Chapter 6 of the Draft EIR, Other CEQA Sections, presents a discussion and comprehensive list of all significant and unavoidable impacts identified in Sections 4.1 through 4.15.

## 1.5 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE NOP

The City of Davis received 11 comment letters during the open comment period on the NOP for the Mace Ranch Innovation Center Project Draft EIR. A copy of each letter and scoping meeting transcript is provided in Appendix B of this Draft EIR. The following letters were authored by public agencies, residents, groups, organizations, and other interested parties.

### Public Agencies

- Eric Federicks, California Department of Transportation
- Kenneth D. Celli, California Energy Commission
- Trevor Cleak, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Gregor Blackburn, Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Scott Morgan, Governor’s Office of Planning and Research
- Katy Sanchez, Native American Heritage Commission (Amended)
- Kathleen A. Dadey, United States Army Engineer District, Department of the Army
- Patrick Blacklock, Yolo County
- Susan Garbini, Yolo Habitat Conservation JPA

### Residents, Groups, and Organizations

- Seth Perez, Pacific Gas & Electric
- Marshall McKay, Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation

The following list, categorized by issue, summarizes the concerns in these letters:

<b><u>Aesthetics and Visual Resources</u></b> (Section 4.1)	Concerns related to the following issue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased light associated with the project.</li> </ul>
<b><u>Agriculture and Forest Resources</u></b> (Section 4.2)	Concerns related to the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of current open space.</li> <li>• Loss of farmland resulting from the development of the proposed project.</li> <li>• Appropriate agricultural buffers.</li> </ul>
<b><u>Air Quality</u></b> (Section 4.3)	Concerns related to the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased emissions from onsite uses.</li> <li>• Impacts concerning odors as a result of the proposed project.</li> </ul>

<p><b><u>Biological Resources</u></b> (Section 4.4)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts to wildlife habitat.</li> <li>• Impacts to jurisdictional waters.</li> <li>• Impacts to Swainson’s hawk, including Swainson’s hawk nesting and foraging habitat.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Cultural Resources</u></b> (Section 4.5)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed project is within aboriginal territories.</li> <li>• Impacts to archeological resources.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Energy</u></b> (Section 4.7)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase of carbon emissions as a result of proposed project.</li> <li>• Cumulative energy impacts.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Hazards and Hazardous Materials</u></b> (Section 4.8)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project construction resulting in potential hazardous waste infiltration into groundwater.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Hydrology and Water Quality</u></b> (Section 4.9)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased water usage resulting in aquifer impacts.</li> <li>• Impacts related to water usage due to project development.</li> <li>• Flooding impacts as a result of the proposed project.</li> <li>• Impacts to wetlands, jurisdictional waters, and navigable waters.</li> <li>• Impacts resulting in groundwater discharge and dewatering.</li> <li>• Implementation of Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan.</li> <li>• Issuance of Industrial Storm Water General Permit.</li> <li>• Threats to water quality resulting from project construction.</li> <li>• Post-project hydraulic flows should not exceed pre-project flows.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Land Use and Urban Decay</u></b> (Section 4.10)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of open space.</li> <li>• Compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods.</li> <li>• County land use policy considerations.</li> <li>• Effects on existing shopping centers or other facilities.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Transportation and Circulation</u></b> (Section 4.14)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased traffic as a result of proposed project.</li> <li>• Degradation of existing roads surrounding the project.</li> <li>• Impacts to emergency access routes as a result of increased traffic.</li> <li>• Lack of bicycle path connections to Class I bike path along County Road 32A.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Utilities</u></b> (Section 4.15)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effects on County infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Other CEQA Sections</u></b> (Chapter 6)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth-inducement.</li> </ul>

All of these issues are addressed in this Draft EIR, in the relevant sections identified in the first column.

## **1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE DRAFT EIR**

---

The Mace Ranch Innovation Center Project Draft EIR is organized into the following sections:

### **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

Provides an introduction and overview describing the intended use of the Draft EIR and the review and certification process, as well as summaries of the chapters included in the Draft EIR and summaries of the environmental resources that would be impacted by the project.

### **Chapter 2 – Executive Summary**

Summarizes the elements of the project and the environmental impacts that would result from implementation of the proposed project, describes proposed mitigation measures and indicates the level of significance of impacts after mitigation. Acknowledges alternatives that would reduce or avoid significant impacts.

### **Chapter 3 – Project Description**

Provides a detailed description of the proposed project, including the location, background information, major objectives, and technical characteristics.

### **Chapter 4 – Environmental Setting, Impacts and Mitigation**

Contains a project-level and cumulative analysis of environmental issue areas associated with the proposed project. The section for each environmental issue contains an introduction and description of the setting of the project site, identifies impacts and recommends appropriate mitigation measures.

### **Chapter 5 – Cumulative Impacts**

Provides discussions required by CEQA regarding cumulative impacts that would result from the proposed project.

### **Chapter 6 – Other CEQA Sections**

Provides discussions required by CEQA regarding impacts that would result from the proposed project, including a summary of potential growth-inducing impacts, significant irreversible changes to the environment, and significant and unavoidable impacts.

### **Chapter 7 – Alternatives Analysis**

Provides a comparative analysis of the alternatives to the proposed project, their respective comparative environmental effects, and a determination of the environmentally superior alternative.

### **Chapter 8 – Mixed-Use Alternative Analysis**

Provides an equal weight analysis of the Mixed-Use Alternative and quantitatively analyzes the respective environmental effects at a level of detail equivalent to that undertaken for the project analysis.

**Chapter 9 – References**

Provides bibliographic information for all references and resources cited.

**Chapter 10 – EIR Authors and Persons Consulted**

Lists report authors and persons consulted who provided technical assistance in the preparation and review of the Draft EIR.

**Appendices**

Includes the NOP, NOP comment letters received, and additional technical information.