

4 EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION

INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS

Approach to the Environmental Analysis

As required by CEQA (State CEQA Guidelines (CCR Section 15126.2)), this Draft EIR identifies and focuses on the significant direct and indirect environmental effects of the project. Short-term effects are generally those associated with construction, and long-term effects are generally those associated with operation of the project. As noted previously and throughout this EIR, the proposed development of the Nishi site is evaluated at a project level, and potential redevelopment that may occur within West Olive Drive as a result of rezoning/redesignation is evaluated at a programmatic level. Also, although the applicant would like to consider an option for connection of water and sewer lines to UC Davis, the UC is not in a position to consider this, including routing options, at this time. Thus, impacts of this option cannot be foreseeably addressed and only connection to city water and sewer service is evaluated in this EIR. Any connection to UC Davis water or sewer infrastructure would require additional CEQA review prior to approval/implementation.

This chapter addresses the environmental setting, environmental impacts and mitigation measures associated with the project in relation to the following resource topics; impacts of the project in combination with other related development is evaluated in the cumulative impact section of this EIR (Chapter 5):

- ▲ Section 4.1, Aesthetics and Visual Resources;
- ▲ Section 4.2, Agriculture and Forest Resources;
- ▲ Section 4.3, Air Quality;
- ▲ Section 4.4, Biological Resources;
- ▲ Section 4.5, Cultural Resources;
- ▲ Section 4.6, Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources;
- ▲ Section 4.7, Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Energy;
- ▲ Section 4.8, Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
- ▲ Section 4.9, Hydrology and Water Quality;
- ▲ Section 4.10, Land Use and Planning;
- ▲ Section 4.11, Noise and Vibration;
- ▲ Section 4.12, Population and Housing;
- ▲ Section 4.13, Public Services and Recreation;
- ▲ Section 4.14, Transportation and Circulation; and
- ▲ Section 4.15, Utilities.

Sections 4.1 through 4.15 follow the same general format as follows:

Introduction identifies the topic(s) evaluated in the section and provides a general overview of the section.

Environmental Setting presents the existing environmental conditions on the project site and surrounding area as appropriate, in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines (CCR Section 15125). The extent of the environmental setting area evaluated (the project study area) differs among resources, depending on the locations where impacts would be expected. For example, air quality impacts are assessed for the air basin (macroscale) as well as the site vicinity (microscale), whereas aesthetic impacts are assessed for the project site vicinity only.

Applicable Policies, Plans, and Regulations presents the laws, regulations, plans, and policies that are relevant to each issue area. Regulations originating from the federal, state, and local levels are each discussed as appropriate.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures identifies the thresholds of significance used to determine the level of significance of the environmental impacts for each resource topic, in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines (CCR Sections 15126, 15126.2, and 15143). The thresholds of significance used in this Draft EIR are based on the checklist presented in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines; best available data; and regulatory standards of federal, state, and local agencies. The level of each impact is determined by comparing the effects of the project to the environmental setting. Key methods and assumptions used to frame and conduct the impact analysis as well as issues or potential impacts not discussed further (such issues for which the project would have no impact) are also described.

Project impacts are organized numerically in each subsection (e.g., Impact 4.3-1, Impact 4.3-2, Impact 4.3-3, etc.). A bold-font impact statement, a summary of each impact, and its level of significance precedes the discussion of each impact. The discussion that follows the impact summary includes the substantial evidence supporting the impact significance conclusion. Impacts and mitigation measures are stated separately for the Nishi site and West Olive Drive, where applicable. Because the project includes amendment to the City's General Plan land use map, each section includes an impact discussion that evaluates consistency of the project with General Plan policies related to the section's topic. For example, Section 4.3, "Air Quality," includes an evaluation of the consistency of the project with General Plan policies dealing with air-quality-related issues.

The Draft EIR must describe any feasible measures that could avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, or compensate for significant adverse impacts, and the measures are to be fully enforceable through incorporation into the project (PRC Section 21081.6[b]). Mitigation measures are not required for effects that are found to be less than significant. Where feasible mitigation for a significant impact is available, it is described following the impact along with its effectiveness at addressing the impact. Each identified mitigation measure is labeled numerically to correspond with the number of the impact that would be mitigated by the measure. Where sufficient feasible mitigation is not available to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level, or where the City lacks the authority to ensure that the mitigation is implemented when needed, the impacts are identified as remaining "significant and unavoidable."

Terminology Used In the EIR

This Draft EIR uses the following terminology to describe environmental effects of the project:

Less-Than-Significant Impact: A project impact is considered less than significant when it does not exceed the threshold of significance and; therefore would not cause a substantial change in the environment (no mitigation required).

Potentially Significant Impact: A potentially significant impact is an environmental effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the environment; however, additional information is needed regarding the extent of the impact to make the determination of significance. For CEQA purposes, a potentially significant impact is treated as if it were a significant impact.

Significant Impact: A project impact is considered significant if it results in a substantial adverse change in the physical conditions of the environment. Significant impacts are identified by the evaluation of project effects in the context of specified significance criteria. Mitigation measures and/or project alternatives are identified to reduce these effects to the environment where feasible.

Significant and Unavoidable Impact: A project impact is considered significant and unavoidable if it would result in a substantial adverse change in the environment that cannot be feasibly avoided or mitigated to a

less-than-significant level if the project is implemented. If a lead agency proposes to approve a project with significant unavoidable impacts, it must adopt a statement of overriding considerations to explain its actions (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15093(b)).

Cumulative Impacts: According to CEQA, “cumulative impacts refer to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts” (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15355). CEQA requires that cumulative impacts be discussed when the “project’s incremental effect is cumulatively considerable... [or] ... provide a basis for concluding that the incremental effect is not cumulatively considerable (CEQA Guidelines, CCR Section 15130 (a)).”

Mitigation Measures: The CEQA Guidelines (CCR Section 15370) define mitigation as:

- a) avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action;
- b) minimizing impacts by limiting the degree of magnitude of the action and its implementation;
- c) rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment;
- d) reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and
- e) compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

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