

6.0 OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Section 15126.2 of the *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines* requires that the EIR include a discussion of (1) growth-inducing impacts, (2) significant environmental effects which cannot be avoided, and (3) significant irreversible environmental changes which would be involved in the project should it be implemented. Sections 15126.4 and 15126.6 of the *State CEQA Guidelines* require that mitigation measures be proposed to minimize significant effects and alternatives to the project are considered and discussed. Cumulative impacts are discussed under each environmental issue area in **Section 4.0** pursuant to Section 15130 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*. Alternatives are analyzed in **Section 5.0** of this document.

The following discussion will focus on a summary of growth-inducing impacts, significant environmental effects which cannot be avoided, and significant irreversible environmental effects.

6.1 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

Section 15126(d) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* requires that this section discuss the ways in which the project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. In general terms, a project may foster spatial, economic, or population growth in a geographic area if it meets any one of the following criteria:

- The project removes an impediment to growth (e.g., the establishment of an essential public service or the provision of new access to an area)
- The project results in the urbanization of land in a remote location (i.e., leapfrog development)
- Economic expansion or growth occurs in an area in response to a project (e.g., changes in revenue base, employment expansion, etc.)
- The project establishes a precedent-setting action (e.g., a change in zoning or general plan amendment approval)

Should a project meet any of these criteria, it can be considered growth inducing under CEQA. An evaluation of this project compared against these growth-inducing criteria is provided below.

Removal of an Impediment to Growth

Growth in an area may result from the removal of physical impediments or restrictions to growth, as well as the removal of planning impediments resulting from land use plans and policies. In this context,

physical growth impediments may include nonexistent or inadequate access to an area or the lack of essential public services (e.g., water service), while planning impediments may include restrictive zoning and/or general plan designations.

The Azusa TOD Specific Plan has taken a district-based zoning approach to accommodate future growth and development intensity within the specific plan area. The specific plan area is currently served by fire and police services, park and recreation facilities, schools, electrical and natural gas services, solid waste services, wastewater services, solid waste services, and additional infrastructure necessary to accommodate the existing development and projected growth. The proposed development does not include or require the establishment of additional public services and/or utilities. However, these existing public service and utility systems can be readily upgraded and extend, if needed.

The increased demands for public services and utility systems would not reduce or impair any existing or future levels of services, either locally or regionally, as costs for increases in public services and utility systems would be provided through cooperative agreements between future developments and servicing agencies, and tax revenue. Further, future development projects would be reviewed on a project-by-project basis, and would not be approved unless public services and utility systems could service the project site. As the TOD Specific Plan is consistent with the Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) regional growth projections, buildout of the Specific Plan would not require substantial development of unplanned or unforeseen public services and utility systems. Therefore, implementation of the Specific Plan would not be growth inducing with respect to removal of an impediment to growth through establishment of an essential public service or expansion to a new area.

An established transportation network exists in the surrounding area that offers local and regional access to the specific plan area. Regional access to the City is provided via Interstate 210, which is located in the southern portion of the City. Local access is provided by various arterial highways that intersect the City, including Foothill Boulevard and Azusa Avenue, among others. Implementation of the Specific Plan would facilitate the installation and construction of transportation improvements in the specific plan area, as discussed in detail in **Section 4.14, Traffic and Circulation**.

These improvements would not provide new access to the surrounding areas, since both regional and local access is already provided by an existing roadway and public transit network. In summary, the design and construction of roadway, as well as the public service and utility infrastructure needed to accommodate buildout of the Specific Plan would not induce growth in an undeveloped area.

Urbanization of Land in Remote Locations (Leapfrog Development)

Under this criterion, the Specific Plan would be considered growth inducing if it would result in the urbanization of land in a remote location. This means that the development would not be contiguous to existing urban development and would “leap” over large areas of undeveloped land. A majority (approximately 60 percent) of the City is built out and developed. Future development resulting from implementation of the Specific Plan is anticipated to occur on both vacant and underutilized land as infill development. This focused development strategy would not result in development of suburban or rural lands. Because the Specific Plan is contiguous to existing development and encourages infill development, it is not growth inducing under this criterion.

Economic Growth

Under this criterion, a project would be considered growth inducing if it would cause economic expansion or economic growth to occur in the project area. Examples of economic expansion or growth include changes in revenue base, employment expansion, etc. Buildout of the Specific Plan would result in additional temporary increases in construction-related job opportunities. Potential employees would likely be drawn from the existing labor force in the City and the San Gabriel Valley.

Long-term growth would occur in the form of an economic response to the proposed 840 multi-family units, 226,000 square feet of retail, 84,000 square feet of services, 93,000 square feet of office space, 150 hotel rooms, and the projected 2,915 residents. It is expected that employees of the future commercial and office developments would live in the surrounding area. The increase in population associated with implementation of the Specific Plan would result in an incremental increase in demand for City goods and services. The existing commercial areas would remain, while additional supporting uses could be constructed to enhance these commercial areas and supply the increased population with additional goods and services. Thus, the economic contribution of this project alone would not be considered growth inducing.

Precedent-Setting Action

Changes from a project that could be precedent setting include (among others) approval of zone change that could have implications for other properties, or that could make it easier for other properties to develop.

The Specific Plan would not be considered growth inducing with respect to the establishment of a precedent-setting action. While The General Plan is the primary guide for growth and development, the Specific Plan focuses on the plan area by taking a district-based zoning approach. In a district-based

zoning approach, each district has a unique vision and a tailored range of allowable uses and development standards that support the desired future condition.

This hybrid approach to zoning combines form-based development standards with a selection of compatible uses that have been tailored for each district. The development standards constitute the constraints for a future project's building envelope in which new construction or a structural remodel is permitted. In addition, design guidelines are provided in key areas to ensure high-quality design that reflects a district's character.

The Azusa TOD Specific Plan has been tailored to meet the City's needs and issues at the present time and foreseeable future. The Specific Plan's guiding principles include prioritizing transit-oriented and mixed use development, encouraging market-driven revitalization and investment through private-public partnerships, zoning and land use regulations, and increasing services and uses, supporting the existing historic character of the City, and integrating sustainable and healthy living practices by improving transit and pedestrian uses and encouraging healthy related land uses.

As discussed in **Section 3.0 Project Description**, the Specific Plan is generally seen as consistent with the General Plan, which identifies the utilization of Specific Plans to plan for underdeveloped land and/or the revitalization of properties within existing corridors and districts. Thus, the Specific Plan is not considered to be growth inducing under this criterion.

Summary of Impacts

Implementation of the Specific Plan would not be growth inducing with respect to removing an impediment to growth (e.g., establishing an essential public service or provision of new access to an area), or development of or encroachment on an isolated or adjacent area of open space. The project would also not be growth-inducing with respect to fostering economic expansion and population growth, and establishing a precedent-setting action. Further, all future development under the Specific Plan would occur over the 20-year buildout period, allowing for development of necessary services and infrastructure to commensurate with the proposed growth.

Conclusion

It must be emphasized that the *State CEQA Guidelines* require an EIR to "discuss the ways" a project could be growth inducing and "discuss the characteristics of some projects that may encourage ... activities that could significantly affect the environment." However, the *State CEQA Guidelines* do not require an EIR to predict or speculate where such growth would occur, in what form it would occur, or when it would occur. Attempting to determine the environmental impacts created by growth that might be induced by

the project is speculative because the size, type, and location of specific future projects are unknown at the present time. Therefore, such impacts are too speculative to evaluate (see *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15145). To the extent that specific projects are known (as discussed in **Section 4.0, Environmental Impact Analysis**, of this EIR), those projects would be subjected to their own environmental analysis. Further analysis of impacts associated with growth in the specific plan area, and corresponding cumulative impact assessment, can be found in the cumulative analyses for each individual topic addressed in **Section 4.0**.

6.2 SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS THAT CANNOT BE AVOIDED IF THE PROJECT IS IMPLEMENTED

Table 2.0-1, Summary of Project Impacts, Mitigation Measures, and Residual Impacts, in **Section 2.0, Executive Summary** and **Section 4.0** of this Program EIR provide a comprehensive identification of the Specific Plan's environmental effects, including the level of significance both before and after mitigation. Many of the impacts that are determined to be significant and unavoidable could potentially be mitigated to less than significant at the individual project level. However, as this Program EIR analyzes impacts at the programmatic level; project information and detailed plans are not available. Therefore, without the ability to evaluate each individual project that could occur as a result of the Specific Plan, these impacts were determined to be significant and unavoidable.

Section 15126.2(b) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* requires that an EIR describe any significant impacts that cannot be avoided, even with the implementation of feasible mitigation measures. Buildout of the Specific Plan would result in the following unavoidable significant and project-related and/or cumulative impacts:

Air Quality

Operation emissions associated with buildout of the Specific Plan would exceed the South Coast Air Quality Management District's (SCAQMD) significance threshold for ROG and NOx. Due to the unknown level of construction activity and operational aspects that could result as part of the Specific Plan buildout, and the possible location of sensitive receptors near to the future project sites, localized air quality impacts to sensitive receptors cannot be determined. In addition, there currently is not sufficient information to make an accurate analysis of the potential impacts of toxic air contaminants (TACs). Consequently, impacts are conservatively assumed to be significant and unavoidable.

6.3 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Section 15126.2(c) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* requires a discussion of any significant irreversible environmental changes that would be caused by the project. Specifically, Section 15126.2(c) states:

Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible, since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irreversible commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

Generally, a project would result in significant irreversible environmental changes if any of the following would occur:

- The primary and secondary impacts would generally commit future generations to similar uses
- The project involves uses in which irreversible damage could result from any potential environmental accidents associated with the project
- The proposed consumption of resources is not justified (e.g., the project involves the wasteful use of energy)

Use of Nonrenewable Resources That Would Commit Future Generations

Land use growth and growth patterns that would result from implementation of the Specific Plan would likely commit future generations to those uses. Once established, land use patterns can be difficult to change and/or significantly influence without considerable political, social, and economic cost. While the development patterns reflected in the Specific Plan represent a commitment of these areas to urban uses for the foreseeable future, the Specific Plan promotes infill development and generally reflects uses already permitted in and around the specific plan area. The Specific Plan represents an improved and more efficient land use pattern, with more growth concentrated on less land and closer to existing infrastructure, than compared to existing conditions. The result is better utilization of already developed land and an increase in infill and compact development. Further, by increasing the density of development in urban areas and decreasing the footprint of growth, pressures to convert open space lands outside areas planned for growth are decreased. As a secondary result, per capita use of other nonrenewable resources decreases under the Specific Plan. These include lower per capita use of water, energy, and fuels; less conversion of open space, and habitat lands; lower per-capita emissions of air pollutants, including GHGs; and slower climate change effects over time.

However, construction activities related to construction of future development would result in the irretrievable commitment of nonrenewable energy resources, primarily in the form of fossil fuels (including fuel oil), natural gas, and gasoline for automobile and construction equipment and aggregate supply used in construction.

With respect to operation activities, compliance with all applicable building codes, as well as project mitigation measures and project requirements, would help ensure that natural resources are conserved or recycled as feasible. It is also possible that new technologies or systems will emerge, or will become more cost-effective or user-friendly, that will further reduce the City's reliance upon nonrenewable natural resources; however, even with implementation of conservation measures consumption of natural resources would generally increase with implementation of the Specific Plan.

Furthermore, new growth generally results in the long-term increase in the demand for electricity and natural gas supplies and distribution. The Specific Plan and other federal and state energy efficiency standards will result in lower per-capita demand by encouraging development in urban areas; encouraging energy conservation in new construction and existing buildings; and reducing the infrastructure energy demands by encouraging alternative transportation such as bicycling, walking, and public transit.

Irreversible Damage From Environmental Accidents

Any growth in the specific plan area includes the potential for irreversible damage from environmental accidents. For example, greater densities expose more people in the same area to unexpected environmental events such as fire, and/or earthquake which could lead to irreversible damage. In addition, irreversible changes to the physical environment could occur from the accidental release of hazardous materials associated with transport on roadways as more hazardous materials are transported through the City and more people are located in closer proximity to hazardous materials threats.

This exposure would exist under any growth scenario. The objectives included in the Specific Plan will support the state's Assembly Bill (AB) 32¹ Green House Gas emission reduction targets and implement

1 In 2006, the Legislature passed and Governor Schwarzenegger signed AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, which set the 2020 greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal into law. It directed the California Air Resources Board to begin developing discrete early actions to reduce greenhouse gases while also preparing a scoping plan to identify how best to reach the 2020 limit. The reduction measures to meet the 2020 target are to be adopted by the start of 2011.

Senate Bill (SB) 375.² Thus, implementation of the Specific Plan does not, in and of itself, result in greater potential of irreversible damage from an environmental accident.

The Proposed Consumption of Resources is Justified

An increase in the demand for electrical and natural gas, water supply, and solid waste and wastewater facilities would occur. However, the project would not involve wasteful or unjustifiable use of these resources, and conservation efforts would be enforced during construction and operation of the projects. In addition, new development associated with buildout of the Specific Plan would be constructed and operated in accordance with specifications contained in Title 24 CCR. In addition, the sustainability design guidelines are incorporated in the Specific Plan. Therefore, the use of these resources would occur in an efficient manner.

² The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (Sustainable Communities Act, SB 375, Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008) supports the State's climate action goals to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through coordinated transportation and land use planning with the goal of more sustainable communities. Under the Sustainable Communities Act, ARB sets regional targets for GHG emissions reductions from passenger vehicle use. In 2010, ARB established these targets for 2020 and 2035 for each region covered by one of the State's metropolitan planning organizations (MPO).