

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

1.1 PURPOSE

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that all state and local agencies consider the environmental consequences of projects over which they have discretionary authority. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is intended to provide decision-makers and the public with information concerning the environmental effects of a proposed project, possible ways to reduce or avoid the possible environmental damage, and identify alternatives to the project. An EIR must also disclose significant environmental impacts that cannot be avoided; growth inducing impacts; effects not found to be significant; as well as significant cumulative impacts of all past, present and reasonably anticipated future projects.

The purpose of this Program EIR is to review the existing conditions, analyze potential environmental impacts, identify General Plan policies that serve as mitigation, and identify additional mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant effects of the proposed General Plan Update.

In addition, the EIR documents background information for the General Plan. Each jurisdiction must prepare supporting environmental documentation for goals and policies contained in the General Plan. This information will be adopted as part of the General Plan.

1.2 AUTHORITY

The City of Cerritos is the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and is responsible for preparing the Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Cerritos General Plan Update (State Clearinghouse No. 2002081107). This Program EIR has been prepared in conformance with CEQA (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.), California CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.), and the rules, regulations, and procedures for implementation of CEQA, as adopted by the City of Cerritos. The principal CEQA Guidelines sections governing content of this document are Sections 15120 through 15132 (Content of an EIR), and Section 15168 (Program EIR).

1.3 APPROACH

State law specifies the basic contents of the General Plan, however, it permits each jurisdiction to use any format deemed appropriate or convenient. General Plans are traditionally organized into a collection of required and optional elements. These elements contain a policy component and supporting documentation. The City of Cerritos intends for the General Plan to be used primarily as a policy document, and

has elected to include supporting documentation for the General Plan both in the Program EIR and the Technical Appendices.

1.3.1 GENERAL PLAN (VOLUME I)

The State of California requires that each jurisdiction prepare and adopt a comprehensive General Plan. The role of the General Plan is to act as a “constitution” for development, the foundation upon which all land use decisions are based. The General Plan is required to address several state mandated issues, more commonly referred to as “elements.” Each local jurisdiction has the right to include additional elements if the issue is important to the long-term development of the community. The Cerritos General Plan Update includes the following elements: Land Use, Community Design, Circulation, Housing, Safety, Conservation, Open Space/Recreation, Air Quality, Noise, and Growth Management.

1.3.2 PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND APPENDICES (VOLUME II AND III)

Volumes II and III include the General Plan Update Program EIR, which includes background data and environmental analysis, and the Technical Appendices, which include technical reports on such topics as traffic, air quality and noise.

Both the Public Resources Code and the CEQA Guidelines discuss the use of “tiering” environmental impact reports by lead agencies. Public Resources Code Section 21068.5 defines “tiering” as:

“The coverage of general matters and environmental effects in an environmental impact report prepared for a policy, plan, program or ordinance followed by narrower or site-specific environmental impact reports which incorporate by reference the discussion in any prior environmental impact report and which concentrate on the environmental effects which: (a) are capable of being mitigated, or (b) were not analyzed as significant effects on the environment in the prior environmental impact report.”

The Cerritos General Plan Update Program EIR is intended to serve as a Program EIR or “first tier EIR.” CEQA Guidelines Section 15168 states that a Program EIR can be prepared in connection with “*the issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program.*” In this case, the Program EIR has been prepared for the City’s General Plan Update.

The approach of a Program EIR is appropriate for evaluating “*a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and can be related either: (1) geographically; (2) as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions; (3) in connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or (4) as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing*

statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15168).

A Program EIR has the following advantages: *“It provides an occasion for a more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives than would be practical in an EIR on an individual action; it ensures consideration of cumulative impacts that might be slighted in a case-by-case analysis; it avoids duplicative reconsideration of basic policy considerations; it allows the lead agency to consider broad policy alternatives and program-wide mitigation measures at an early time when the agency has greater flexibility to deal with basic problems of cumulative impacts; and it allows reduction in paperwork” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15168).*

Subsequent development projects proposed within the City must be reviewed in the context of this Program EIR to determine if additional environmental documentation is required. If the subsequent project would have environmental effects not addressed in the Program EIR, additional environmental review would be required. Where no new effects and no new mitigation measures are involved, the subsequent project can be approved without additional environmental documentation. Where an EIR is required for a subsequent project, the EIR should implement the applicable mitigation measures developed in the Program EIR, and focus its analysis on site-specific issues not previously addressed.

1.4 COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA

The Program EIR is subject to a 45-day review period by responsible and trustee agencies and interested parties. In accordance with the provision of Sections 15085(a) and 15087(a)(1) of the CEQA Guidelines, the City of Cerritos acting as Lead Agency: 1) will publish a notice of availability of a Draft EIR in the Los Cerritos Community News, a newspaper of general circulation; and 2) will prepare and transmit a Notice of Completion (NOC) to the State Clearinghouse. Proof of publication is available at the City of Cerritos Community Development Department.

Any public agency or members of the public desiring to comment on the Draft EIR must submit their comments in writing to the individual identified on the document’s NOC prior to the end of the public review period. Upon the close of the public review period, the Lead Agency will then proceed to evaluate and prepare responses to all relevant oral and written comments received from both citizens and public agencies during the review period.

The Final EIR will consist of the Draft EIR, any revisions to the Draft EIR and responses to comments addressing concerns raised by responsible agencies or reviewing parties. After the Final EIR is completed and at least 10 days prior to its certification, a copy of the response to comments made by public agencies on the Draft EIR will be provided to the respective agency.

1.5 INTENDED USES OF THIS EIR

The City of Cerritos, as the Lead Agency for this project, will use this Program EIR in consideration of the proposed General Plan Update. This document will provide environmental information to several other agencies affected by the project, or which are likely to have an interest in the project. Various State and Federal agencies exercise control over certain aspects of the study area. The various public, private and political agencies and jurisdictions with a particular interest in the proposed project, include, but are not limited to the following:

- ABC Unified School District
- Bellflower Unified School District
- California Air Resources Board (CARB)
- California Department of Conservation
- California Department of Fish and Game
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
- California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)
- California Office of Emergency Services
- California Regional Water Quality Control Board (CRWQB)
- California Reclamation Board (CRB)
- Cerritos Community College
- City of Artesia
- City of Bellflower
- City of Buena Park
- City of Cerritos
- City of Cypress
- City of La Palma
- City of Lakewood
- City of Santa Fe Springs
- County of Los Angeles
- County of Orange
- County of Los Angeles Public Works
- County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
- Los Angeles County Fire Department
- Los Angeles County Health Department
- Los Angeles County Sheriff Department
- Metro Water District
- Gateway Cities Council of Governments (GCOG)
- South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD)
- Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

1.6 EIR SCOPING PROCESS

In compliance with the CEQA Guidelines, the City of Cerritos has taken steps to maximize opportunities for individuals, parties, and agencies to participate in the environmental process. During the preparation of the General Plan Update Program EIR, an effort was made to contact various Federal, State, regional, and local government agencies and other interested parties to solicit comments and inform the public of the proposed project. This included the distribution of an Initial Study and Notice of Preparation (NOP) on August 23, 2002.

1.6.1 INITIAL STUDY

In accordance with Section 15063(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, as amended, the City of Cerritos undertook the preparation of an Initial Study. The Initial Study determined that a number of environmental issue areas may be impacted. As a result, the Initial Study determined that the Program EIR should address the project's significant impacts on the following environmental issue areas:

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

1.6.2 NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Pursuant to the provision of Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, as amended, the City of Cerritos circulated a NOP to public agencies, special districts, and members of the public requesting such notice. The required public review period commenced on August 23, 2002 with the 30-day review concluding on September 23, 2002. The purpose of the NOP was to formally convey that the City is preparing a Program EIR for the City of Cerritos General Plan Update, and that as Lead Agency, was soliciting input regarding the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the General Plan Update Program EIR. The Initial Study was circulated with the NOP. The NOP, Initial Study, and responses to the NOP are provided in Appendix E.

1.6.3 NOP AND SCOPING RESULTS

The following specific environmental concerns were raised by responses to the NOP and in comments expressed during the scoping process. The NOP responses and written comments received are contained in Appendix E.

The City of Cerritos received NOP comments from the following agencies:

- Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse
- County of Orange, Planning & Development Services Department
- County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
- Southern California Gas Company
- County of Los Angeles, Department of Health Services, Public Health

Below is a summary of the issues raised in the NOP comment letters and the EIR section where the comments are addressed.

Projected sewage flows and comparisons with the County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County current predictions to determine any potential impacts (refer to Section 4.9, *Public Services and Utilities*);

Provision of gas service to future development in the City (refer to Section 4.9, *Public Services and Utilities*); and

Development impacts on closed disposal sites (refer to Section 4.11, *Public Health and Safety*).

1.7 FORMAT OF THE PROGRAM EIR

Section 1.0, *Introduction*, provides an overview of the proposed Cerritos General Plan Update and the scope, use and approach of the Program EIR.

Section 2.0, *Executive Summary*, provides a summary of the project, environmental analysis, alternatives, as well as areas of controversy and issues to be resolved.

Section 3.0, *Project Description*, includes a detailed description of the General Plan Update. This section describes the environmental setting and defines the project. Assumptions used during the preparation of this document are also identified.

Section 4.0, *Environmental Analysis*, evaluates the impacts associated with the proposed General Plan Update goals and policies. This section is organized by topic (i.e., land use, traffic, parks and recreation). Each area includes a description of the environmental setting relative to that issue; the environmental effects of the proposed project; mitigation measures; and determinance of significance after mitigation. Mitigation measures that are incorporated into the General Plan Update in the form of goals and policies are described in the Environmental Impacts and Mitigation

Measures subsection and additional mitigation measures, which may be required to mitigate project impacts, are recommended.

Impacts and mitigation measures are generally organized under the issue topics. However, an impact or mitigation measure's location within the document should not restrict it from being considered under another issue topic, even though omitted from that section. Many of the impacts relating to a General Plan, such as Cerritos', are multi-faceted. Similarly, the goals and policies and actions that serve as mitigation measures and additional mitigation measures recommended, may accomplish several objectives and mitigate more than one impact. It is important that decision-makers be cognizant of this fact in their consideration and use of this document. If mitigation measures are altered, the affect that would have on other issues should be evaluated.

Cumulative impacts are discussed in Section 4.13.

Section 5.0, *Alternatives to the Proposed Action*, is a discussion of the alternatives to the proposed project and related impacts and evaluation. An environmentally superior option is discussed in this section.

Sections 6.0, *Growth Inducing Impacts of the Proposed Action*; 7.0, *Effects Found Not To Be Significant*; 8.0, *Significant Environmental Effects which cannot be Avoided if the Proposed Action is Implemented*; and 9.0, *Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes Which Would Occur if the Proposed Action is Implemented*; address the remainder of CEQA mandated issue areas.

Section 10.0, *References*, lists the organizations and individuals contacted during the preparation of the General Plan Update Program EIR, report preparation personnel and a list of reference materials.

Section 11.0, *Responses to Comments*, provides both the comment letters and responses to comments, as well as a comprehensive list of errata and changes incorporated into the Final General Plan and EIR. This section will be included in the Final EIR.

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