

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Program Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR) is a first tier evaluation of the environmental effects associated with the adoption and implementation of the updated San Marcos General Plan. This Program EIR has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970 (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.), and the Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA published by the Resources Agency of the State of California (California Administrative Code Section 15000 et seq.).

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM EIR

This Program EIR is intended to provide information to public agencies, the general public, and decision makers regarding potential environmental impacts related to adoption and implementation of the updated San Marcos General Plan. The purpose of an EIR, under the provisions of CEQA, is “to identify the significant effects on the environment of a project, to identify alternatives to the project, and to indicate the manner in which those significant effects can be mitigated or avoided” (Public Resources Code Section 21002.1[a]).

According to CEQA Guidelines (Section 15168), a Program EIR may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project, are related geographically, and are logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions in connection with issuance of rules, regulations, or plans. The Program EIR allows for a more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives than would be practical in a project EIR on separate individual actions, and ensures consideration of cumulative impacts that might be slighted on a case-by-case basis.

This Program EIR provides first-tier analysis of the environmental effects of the updated San Marcos General Plan. Section 15152 of the CEQA Guidelines indicated that tiering is appropriate when the sequence of analysis is from an EIR prepared for a General Plan, policy, or program to an EIR or negative declaration for another plan, policy, or program of lesser scope, or to a site-specific EIR or negative declaration. Subsequent activities in accordance with the proposed San Marcos General Plan must be examined in light of this Program EIR to determine whether an additional environmental analysis must be conducted and documentation prepared. If a subsequent project or later activity would have effects that were not examined in this Program EIR, or were not examined at an appropriate level of detail to be used for the later activity, an initial study would need to be prepared, leading to a negative declaration or an EIR. If the City finds that pursuant to Section 15152 of the CEQA Guidelines, no new effects could occur or new mitigation measures would be required on a subsequent project, the City can approve the activity as being within the scope of the project covered by this Program EIR, and no new environmental documentation would be required.

This Program EIR serves as an information document for use by public agencies, the general public, and decision makers. This Program EIR is not a City of San Marcos policy document; it does, however, discuss the impacts of development pursuant to the General Plan and analyzes project alternatives. This

Program EIR would be used by the City of San Marcos City Council in assessing impacts of the proposed project prior to adoption of the General Plan.

1.2 LEAD AND RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES

A lead agency is defined as the public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project that may have a significant impact upon the environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15367). The city of San Marcos is the lead agency for the preparation of this Program EIR, as defined by CEQA.

Responsible agencies are defined as those public agencies that propose to carry out or approve a project for which a lead agency is preparing an EIR, and includes all agencies other than the lead agency that have discretionary approval power over the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15381). No other public agencies directly carry out or have discretionary approval over the General Plan except for the City of San Marcos.

1.3 SCOPE OF THIS EIR

The San Marcos General Plan EIR is a Program EIR. CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(a) defines a Program EIR as an EIR that may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related (1) geographically; (2) as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions; (3) in connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general 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 impacts that can be mitigated in similar ways.

Program EIRs can be used as the basic, general environmental assessment for an overall program of projects developed through the stated planning horizon. A Program EIR has several advantages. First, it provides a basic reference document to avoid unnecessary repetition of facts or analysis. Second, it allows the lead agency to look at the broad, regional impacts of a program of actions before its adoption and eliminates redundant or contradictory approaches to the consideration of regional and cumulative impacts.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15143, a lead agency should limit the EIR's discussion of environmental effects to specific issues where significant effects on the environment may occur. Implementation of the 2050 RTP/SCS may result in significant adverse effects on a number of environmental issue areas. These issue areas are listed below and are the focus of this EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Paleontological Resources
- Population and Housing

- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Public Services, Utilities, and Energy
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic

1.4 PUBLIC REVIEW AND PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Consistent with the requirements of CEQA, the City of San Marcos conducted public outreach efforts during the preparation of this EIR to contact affected agencies, organizations, and individuals who may have an interest in the proposed General Plan. This early and open consultation with the relevant agencies, organizations, and individuals assisted in defining the scope of this EIR as discussed above in Section 1.3.

Notice of Preparation

The City of San Marcos initiated the EIR scoping process on July 11, 2011, through the circulation of a Notice of Preparation (NOP). The NOP was received by the State Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse) at the California Office of Planning and Research on July 11, 2011. The Clearinghouse is responsible for monitoring compliance of state agencies in providing timely responses. The Clearinghouse assigned state identification number SCH No. 2011071028 to this EIR.

The NOP provides formal notification to all federal, state, and local agencies involved with funding or approval of the project, and to other interested organizations and members of the public, that an EIR will be prepared for the project. The NOP is intended to encourage interagency communication concerning the proposed action and provide sufficient background information about the proposed action so that agencies, organizations, and individuals can respond with specific comments and questions on the scope and content of the EIR. A copy of the NOP is provided in Appendix A, as well as all the written responses received during the initial 30-day NOP period. Comment letters were received from the following agencies and organizations:

- County of San Diego, Air Pollution Control District
- County of San Diego Archaeological Society, Inc.
- County of San Diego, Department of Planning and Land Use
- State of California, Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit
- State of California-Business, Transportation & Housing Agency, Department of Transportation, District 11
- State of California, Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resources
- State of California, Department of Fish and Game, San Diego Region 5
- State of California, Native American Heritage Commission
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security, FEMA Region IX, Floodplain Management & Insurance Branch
- Pala Band of Mission Indians

- Vallecitos Water District
- Rancho Santa Fe Association
- Elfin Forest Harmony Grove Town Council
- Twin Oaks Valley Community Sponsor Group

Availability of Draft Program EIR

The Draft Program EIR is available at the City of San Marcos City Hall and the San Marcos Library for a 45-day public review period from November 21, 2011 to January 5, 2012. The City of San Marcos City Hall is located at 1 Civic Center Drive San Marcos, CA 92069. The San Marcos Library is located at 2 Civic Center Drive. Documents may be reviewed during regular business hours.

Comments from agencies and individuals are invited regarding the information contained in the Program EIR. Where possible, those responding should endeavor to provide the information they feel is lacking in the Program EIR, or should indicate where the information may be found. All comments on the Program EIR should be sent to:

City of San Marcos
Community Development Department
Attn: Garth Koller, Principal Planner
1 Civic Center Drive
San Marcos, CA 92069

Following the 45-day period of circulation and review of the Program EIR, all comments and the City's responses to the comments will be incorporated into a Final Program EIR prior to certification of the document by the City of San Marcos.

1.5 STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE PROGRAM EIR

This Program EIR is organized into an Executive Summary and eight chapters. The Executive Summary includes a brief project description, and summarizes project impacts and mitigation measures. Chapter 1.0 is this Introduction. Chapter 2.0 provides a detailed description of the General Plan. Chapter 3.0 includes a discussion the general environmental setting of the planning area. Chapter 3.0 also contains individual subsections of Chapter 3.0 analyze project impacts and identify mitigation measures designed to reduce significant impacts. An analysis of long-term effects including maximum theoretical buildout, cumulative impacts, growth inducing impacts, significant irreversible environmental impacts and areas of no significant impact is provided in Chapter 4.0. Chapter 5.0 provides an analysis of alternatives to the proposed project. Chapter 6.0 contains reference information and Chapter 7.0 contains a list of EIR preparers.

The Appendices consist of the Notice of Preparation and Responses to the Notice of Preparation (Appendix A) and technical documents (Appendices B through I) included as supporting information to the Program EIR. In compliance with the Public Resources Section 21081.6, a mitigation monitoring and

reporting program (MMRP) will be prepared as a separately bound document that will be adopted in conjunction with the certification of the Final Program EIR and project approval.

1.6 GENERAL APPROACH TO PROGRAM EIR ANALYSIS

As discussed above, the approach to the analysis presented in this Program EIR is programmatic in nature. Each environmental issue is analyzed in the same manner starting with a discussion of the existing environmental setting. Thresholds of significance are then defined and used to measure the project's potential impact in the environmental impact section. If the General Plan would result in a significant impact for a particular environmental issue, mitigation measures are included within the discussion. The majority of the mitigation measures included in this Program EIR have been derived from the Implementation Plan for the General Plan. Each implementation program is a procedure, program, or technique that requires City action, either alone or in collaboration with non-City organizations or state and federal agencies. Some of the implementation programs are processes or procedures the City currently administers on a day-to-day basis (such as development project review), while others identify new programs or projects. By identifying a responsible party, a timeline for implementation, and a monitoring frequency, the Implementation Plan provides a mechanism for ensuring that potential impacts resulting from the proposed project are reduce below a level of significance. It should be noted that not all implementation programs would serve as mitigation in this Program EIR and that mitigation measures proposed are not all from the Implementation Plan. Lastly, the analysis includes a discussion on the level of significance of each environmental impact after proposed mitigation measures are incorporated.

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