

1 INTRODUCTION

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared to assess the potential environmental impacts of approving the Cordes Ranch Specific Plan project (the “Project”). It is a public informational document, which describes the existing environmental setting of the area in which the Project would be developed (“Specific Plan Area”) and vicinity, discusses the Project’s proposed characteristics, and identifies the Project’s potential environmental impacts. Additionally, the Draft EIR identifies feasible mitigation measures and a reasonable range of alternatives that would avoid or reduce significant impacts. The City of Tracy (“City”) is the lead agency for this Project. This Draft EIR is intended to inform City decision-makers, and responsible, trustee and other interested agencies, and the public of the Project’s potential environmental impacts. This Draft EIR has been prepared in accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements.

A. Proposed Action

The proposed project, which is described in greater detail in Chapter 3, involves the development of approximately 1,780 acres of land in unincorporated San Joaquin County, adjacent to the City, with commercial, office and business park industrial uses (“Project”). In order to implement the Project, a number of approvals will be necessary including, among others: adoption of a General Plan amendment; approval of the Cordes Ranch Specific Plan (which would serve as zoning for the Project) (“Specific Plan”); development agreement(s); annexation of the Specific Plan Area to the City of Tracy; tentative and final subdivision maps; development permits and building permits. The Specific Plan sets forth a comprehensive planning framework as well as development regulations and design guidelines relating to land uses, development standards, architecture landscaping, park/recreational/open space facilities, circulation, signage, sustainability features, as well as all other necessary on- and off-site infrastructure and improvements. The Project is described in more detail in Chapter 3, Project Description.

B. Report Organization

This Draft EIR is organized into the following chapters:

- “ **Chapter 1: Introduction.** Provides a preface and overview describing both the intended use of this Draft EIR and the review and certification process of the EIR and related Project approvals.
- “ **Chapter 2: Report Summary.** Summarizes the potential environmental impacts that would result from the Project, describes recommended feasible mitigation measures, and indicates the level of significance of environmental impacts before and after mitigation. A Summary Table is also included.
- “ **Chapter 3: Project Description.** Describes the Project in detail, including the Specific Plan Area location and characteristics; Project objectives; Project components; proposed capital improvements; and implementation.
- “ **Chapter 4: Environmental Evaluation.** Provides an analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the Project and presents recommended feasible mitigation measures, if required, to reduce their significance.
- “ **Chapter 5: Alternatives to the Plan.** Considers a reasonable range of alternatives to the Project to evaluate whether any of the alternatives can feasibly reduce impacts while still achieving most of the Project objectives.
- “ **Chapter 6: CEQA-Required Assessment Conclusions.** Discusses other required topics including potential growth inducement, significant and unavoidable effects, and significant irreversible changes that may occur as a result of the Project.
- “ **Chapter 7: Report Preparation.**

C. Key Issues

This Draft EIR will analyze the following environmental topics: Aesthetics, Agricultural Resources, Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation/Traffic, and Utilities and Services.

As a result of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) scoping process, the topic areas of Mineral Resources and Forestry Resources were determined to not require further study in the Draft EIR because neither resource is located within the Specific Plan Area, nor identified in the Tracy General Plan or otherwise as occurring within the Specific Plan Area.

D. Environmental Review Process

In accordance with Public Resources Code Sections 21100, 21151, and CEQA Guidelines Section 15064(a)(1) and (f)(1), the City determined that an EIR would be necessary for the Project since it is not exempt from CEQA review and may cause a significant effect on the environment. The City circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to the public; local, state, and federal agencies; and other interested parties as required under the law to solicit comments on the proper scope of environmental review for the Project. Comments raised in response to the NOP were considered during the preparation of this Draft EIR and also are included in Appendix A.

Upon completion of this Draft EIR, the City filed a Notice of Completion (NOC) with the State Office of Planning and Research, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15085.

The issuance of the NOC commenced the public review period for the Draft EIR. During this period, all parties are invited to submit written comments to the City of Tracy to:

Mr. Bill Dean
City of Tracy
Development Services
333 Civic Center Plaza
Tracy, CA 95376
E-mail: William.Dean@ci.tracy.ca.us

The City will hold a public hearing on the Draft EIR during the review period, as indicated in the Notice of Completion included at the beginning of this document. All interested parties are invited to attend the hearing to offer oral and written comments on this Draft EIR. Notice of the time and location of this meeting will be published in accordance with the applicable noticing procedures. All comments or questions regarding the Draft EIR must be provided no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 20, 2013 and should be addressed, as noted above.

Following the close of the comment period, a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) will be prepared to respond to all substantive comments received on the Draft EIR related to environmental issues surrounding the Project. The FEIR will be available for public review prior to consideration of its certification by the City of Tracy City Council. If the City Council finds that: (1) the FEIR is “adequate and complete”; (2) it reflects the City’s independent judgment and analysis; and (3) it was presented to the City Council, which reviewed and considered the information in the FEIR, the City will certify the FEIR.

In conjunction with the City Council’s consideration of the FEIR, the City Council will also consider the Project itself, and will decide whether to approve, revise, or reject the Project. If the Project is approved, the City Council will impose mitigation measures specified in this Draft EIR (and as set out in the Project’s mitigation, monitoring and reporting program (MMRP)) as conditions of Project approval to ensure enforceability. Public agencies are charged with the duty to consider and minimize environmental impacts of the development where feasible, and have an obligation to balance a variety of

public objectives. In doing so, the City may consider economic, social, environmental, and other factors. For any identified significant impacts for which no mitigation measure is feasible and therefore the impact remains significant and unavoidable, the City Council may approve the Project only if it finds that mitigation measures have been required to reduce, to the extent feasible, the impact's significance, and/or that such mitigation is infeasible for specified social, economic, and for other reasons. (Pub. Res. Code § 21081) In so doing, the City Council will be required to adopt a statement of overriding considerations which document that the Project's benefits outweigh the impacts in question.

This Draft EIR provides information on which decisions about the proposed Project can be based. It has been prepared according to the professional standards and practices of the EIR preparers' individual disciplines and in conformance with the legal requirements of CEQA and its implementing regulations.

If the City Council approves the Project, it will also adopt a MMRP, which will set forth the mitigation measures that have been incorporated into or imposed on the Project to reduce or avoid significant effects on the environment (Pub. Res. Code § 21081.6(a)). This MMRP will be designed to ensure compliance with these measures during Project implementation. Throughout the Draft EIR, mitigation measures have been clearly defined and presented in a language that will facilitate establishment of an MMRP.

E. Intended Uses of this EIR

This Draft EIR has been prepared in accordance with CEQA and its implementing regulations. This Draft EIR will be used by the City and other responsible and trustee agencies in their consideration of the various Project approvals within their respective jurisdictions in order to identify and evaluate the Project's significant environmental impacts. As mandated by CEQA Guidelines §15124(d), this section contains a list of agencies that are expected

to use this Draft EIR in their decision-making, and a list of the actions (both discretionary and ministerial) necessary to implement the Project.

Specifically the following approvals will be needed from the City of Tracy to implement the Project:

- General Plan Amendment
- Cordes Ranch Specific Plan
- City of Tracy Municipal Code Amendments (i.e. Zoning Map and Text Amendments to reflect the Cordes Ranch Specific Plan Zoning District).
- Parcel Maps, Lot Line Adjustments, Tentative and Final Subdivision Maps
- Development Agreement(s)
- Conditional Use Permits
- Development Review Permits
- Encroachment Permits, Grading Permits, Building Permits

The Project also will need to obtain approval from the San Joaquin County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to annex the Specific Plan Area (and potential related actions) to the City of Tracy. In addition, implementation of the Project may require permits or approvals from the following local, regional, state, and federal agencies:

- San Joaquin County
- San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District
- San Joaquin Council of Governments
- Westside Irrigation District
- Byron-Bethany Irrigation District
- Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- California Department of Transportation
- State Department of Conservation
- State Department of Water Resources
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation