4 ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

This chapter consists of 15 sections that evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Project. In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines and other applicable thresholds of significance as determined appropriate by the City, in its discretion, the Project's potential environmental effects are analyzed for the following environmental topic areas:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology, Soils, and Seismicity
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population, Housing, and Employment
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

As discussed in Chapter 1, forestry resources and mineral resources were not analyzed in this Draft EIR because it was determined through the scoping process that the Project would not have any impacts to these resources due to existing conditions in the Specific Plan Area and vicinity.

A. Format of the Environmental Evaluation

Each section in Chapter 4 generally follows the same format and consists of the following subsections:

- The *Regulatory Framework* subsection contains an overview of the federal, State, and local laws and regulations applicable to each environmental topic area.

- The *Existing Conditions* subsection describes the environmental setting with regard to the environmental topic area at issue.
- The *Standards of Significance* subsection tells how an impact is judged to be significant in this Draft EIR. These standards are based on the State CEQA guidelines and other regulatory criteria where noted.
- The *Impact Discussion* provides an analysis of the Project's potential environmental impacts and provides a conclusion as to the level of significance with respect to each impact. This section includes a discussion of the Project's individual and cumulative impacts.
- The *Impacts and Mitigation Measures* section numbers and lists identified impacts and feasible measures that would mitigate each impact.

In Sections 4.1 through 4.15, each numbered impact is considered significant prior to mitigation, unless it is specifically identified as less-than-significant. Feasible mitigation measures have been identified that would reduce significant impacts to less-than-significant levels. Impacts would be less than significant after mitigation unless they are noted as significant and unavoidable in the text.

Under CEQA, an EIR is required to identify feasible mitigation measures that could reduce identified impacts to less-than-significant levels. If the City certifies the EIR and approves the Project, the identified mitigation measures will be incorporated into a Mitigation Monitor and Reporting Program (MMRP) as enforceable measures.

B. Cumulative Impact Analysis

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines requires an EIR to discuss cumulative impacts that could result from the project, in combination with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future projects. If it is determined there would be a cumulative impact, then the EIR needs to evaluate whether the project's contribution is "cumulatively considerable."

Where the incremental effect of a project is not "cumulatively considerable," a lead agency need not consider that effect significant but must briefly describe its basis for concluding that the incremental effect is not cumulatively considerable. The cumulative impacts analyses in Sections 4.1 to 4.15 are included in the impact discussion in each section.

1. Geographic Area for Cumulative Analysis

Individual cumulative impacts may occur over different geographic areas. The cumulative discussions in Sections 4.1 through 4.15 explain the geographic scope of the area affected by each cumulative effect (e.g. watershed or air basin). The geographic area considered for each cumulative impact depends upon the impact that is being analyzed. For example, in assessing aesthetic impacts, only development within the vicinity of the Project would contribute to a cumulative visual effect. In assessing air quality impacts, on the other hand, all development within the air basin contributes to regional emissions of criteria pollutants, and basinwide projections of emissions are the best tool for determining the cumulative effect.

2. Cumulative Projects Considered

The State CEQA Guidelines §15130 provide two approaches to analyzing cumulative impacts. The first is the "list approach," which requires a listing of past, present, and reasonably anticipated future projects producing related or cumulative impacts. The second is the projection approach wherein the relevant projections contained in an adopted General Plan or related planning document that is designed to evaluate regional or area wide conditions are summarized. A reasonable combination of the two approaches may also be used.

This Draft EIR uses a combination of the list approach and the projections approach for the cumulative analysis and considers the development anticipated to occur upon the long-term buildout of the Tracy General Plan. Appendix B contains a list of the projects considered for analyzing cumulative impacts.