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## OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

### CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

CEQA requires the analysis of impacts due to cumulative development that would occur independent of, but during the same timeframe as, the project under consideration, or in the foreseeable future. By requiring an evaluation of cumulative impacts, CEQA attempts to minimize the potential that large-scale environmental impacts would be ignored due to the project-by-project nature of project-level analyses contained in EIRs.

Cumulative analyses need not be undertaken in the same manner as those aimed at evaluating the project under consideration. According to Section 15130(b) of the CEQA Guidelines:

The discussion of cumulative impacts shall reflect the severity of the impacts and their likelihood of occurrence, but the discussion need not provide as great detail as provided of the effects attributable to the project alone. The discussion should be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness, and should focus on the cumulative impact to which the identified other projects contribute rather than the attributes of other projects which do not contribute to the cumulative impact. The following elements are necessary to an adequate discussion of cumulative impacts:

### CUMULATIVE CONTEXT

Cumulative analyses included in this EIR are based on an understanding of anticipated growth within the region that would affect the severity of project impacts identified in this EIR, based on adopted plans (e.g., General Plans) for Ceres, surrounding cities and the county, and including assumptions of the following planned developments in the vicinity: Copper Trails Neighborhood, Maple Glen Master Plan, Mitchell Ranch Center and the Ceres Gateway Center. Different analyses use different cumulative development scenarios, because the location of future growth that affects cumulative impacts differs by the type of resource. As an example, the appropriate cumulative development base would be growth throughout the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin, because growth throughout the air basin contributes to air pollution.

### SUMMARY OF CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The potential for cumulative impacts are discussed within the analysis chapters 4 through 19. In summary, development of the Plan area as proposed would contribute to a cumulative increase in impacts related to disturbance of special-status species, seismic ground shaking, use and transport of hazardous materials, stormwater runoff, demand for sewer, roadway noise on proposed uses, and some of the impacts related to increases in traffic. However, the Project's contribution to these cumulative effects would be *less than significant* or would be reduced to a level of less than cumulatively considerable through implementation of any project-specific mitigation measures.

Development of the Plan area as proposed would contribute to a cumulative increase in impacts related to loss of agricultural lands, regional air quality emissions, roadway noise on existing uses, traffic, and greenhouse gas emissions for which no feasible mitigation has been identified that would reduce these cumulative effects to less than significant levels, and they would remain *significant and unavoidable*.

## **GROWTH INDUCING IMPACTS**

An EIR must discuss the ways in which a proposed project could foster economic or population growth or the construction of additional housing in the vicinity of the project and how that growth would in turn, affect the surrounding environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126 [g]). Growth can be induced in a number of ways, including through the elimination of obstacles to growth, or through the stimulation of economic activity within the region. The discussion of the removal of obstacles to growth relates directly to the removal of infrastructure limitations or regulatory constraints that could result in growth unforeseen at the time of project approval.

Several factors must be considered when assessing the growth-inducing effects of a project. These include the following:

**Elimination of Obstacles to Growth:** The extent to which infrastructure capacity provided to the plan area or a change in regulatory structure would allow additional development in the Ceres community; and

**Promotion of Economic Expansion:** The extent to which development of the proposed development could cause increased activity in the local or regional economy. Economic effects can include such effects as:

- **Increased Indirect Demand:** The extent to which the proposed Specific Plan could generate secondary or indirect effects on other employment industries in the region.
- **Increased Pressure on Land Use Intensification:** The extent to which the proposed Specific Plan would increase pressure on the City of Ceres and/or cities or other counties in the Central Valley to redesignate land to higher land use intensities.

## **ELIMINATION OF OBSTACLES TO GROWTH**

The elimination of either physical or regulatory obstacles to growth is considered to be a growth-inducing effect. A physical obstacle to growth typically involves the lack of public service infrastructure. The extension of public service infrastructure, including roadways, water mains, and sewer lines, into areas that are not currently provided with these services would be expected to support new development. Similarly, the elimination or change to a regulatory obstacle, including existing growth and development policies, could result in new growth.

Following approval of the Sphere of Influence boundary change currently being sought, the boundaries of the Plan area would form the eastern and southern boundaries of the primary sphere, with the secondary sphere extending to the south. While new infrastructure would be required to serve the proposed Specific Plan, this infrastructure will be sized to serve the proposed Specific Plan, as growth is not anticipated to the western boundary. Any new development would occur in the approved Sphere of Influence, and any areas to be served would need to be annexed to the City of Ceres, and be subject to an areawide plan. Therefore, the provision of infrastructure is only one aspect of enabling growth of the City to occur.

## **PROMOTION OF ECONOMIC EXPANSION**

The proposed Specific Plan would increase economic activity. Construction would increase employment opportunities temporarily. Once occupied, new residential development typically generates a secondary or indirect demand for other services, such as grocery stores, dry cleaners, banking, and communications. This demand is anticipated to be met by planned commercial area in the Plan area as well as existing commercial areas in other parts of Ceres and the surrounding communities.

Increased economic activity can increase demand for new construction, and create pressure to either expand into undeveloped areas or increase the density of development within urban areas. This pressure would also increase as a result of residents encroaching on areas traditionally used for farming.

In summary, the proposed Specific Plan would contribute to economic activity in Stanislaus County and surrounding region, and could induce growth. Direct effects on growth, that is, the increased population due to residents living in the proposed Specific Plan, is the subject of this Draft EIR. The indirect growth due to increased demand for goods and services, combined with encroachment into an agricultural area, could result in pressure to expand the development area and/or develop additional housing elsewhere in the City or County. However, the rate of growth would be dependent on market forces, and how it would affect housing development elsewhere in the County is not known at this time.

## **SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS**

According to CEQA Guidelines [Section 15126, subd. (b); Section 21000, subd. (b)], a Draft EIR must include a description of those impacts identified as significant and unavoidable should the proposed action be implemented. These impacts are unavoidable because it has been determined that either no mitigation, or only partial mitigation, is feasible. The final determination of significance of impacts and of the feasibility of mitigation measures would be made by the Ceres City Council as part of certification action.

The potential environmental impacts that would result from the proposed Specific Plan are summarized in Table 2-1. In most cases, impacts that have been identified would be less than significant after incorporation of the mitigation measures described in Table 2-1. Those impacts that cannot be feasibly mitigated to a less than significant level would remain as significant unavoidable adverse impacts, and are summarized in Chapter 2 of this document.

## **SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

Under CEQA, an EIR must analyze the extent to which a project's primary and secondary effects would commit resources to uses that future generations will probably be unable to reverse [CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c); 15127].

Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would result in the long-term commitment of resources to Plan area development. Specific long-term effects of the proposed Specific Plan could include:

- Increased ambient noise;
- Irreversible commitment of municipal resources to the provision of service and infrastructure for future urban and suburban development;

- Irreversible consumption of goods and services associated with urban development;
- Increased traffic volumes on existing roadways; and
- Irreversible consumption of natural resources.

Those impacts that could be significant are addressed throughout this Draft EIR. See, for example, the chapters of this document discussing Transportation and Circulation, Noise, and Utilities.

Development of the Plan area as proposed could result in the commitment of nonrenewable resources (e.g., gravel and petroleum products) and slowly renewable resources (e.g., wood products) used in construction. The maintenance of structures in the Plan area would also require further commitment of energy resources (e.g., petroleum products for vehicle operations, natural gas and electricity for lighting, heating, and cooling). Although the Project would result in the irreversible commitment of resources, it would provide benefits, such as increasing the supply of housing and providing job opportunities.

The proposed Project would commit future generations to development in the Plan area, since it is unlikely to be economically feasible or prudent to restore the site to its pre-development agricultural condition once development there has taken place.

The Plan area is currently in agricultural use, and the development in the Plan area would require additional electric and gas service for the foreseeable future. However, these additional services are expected to be within the capabilities of the utility providers, and no major delivery upgrades for these utility systems are expected to be necessary as a result of Project development. In addition, resources would be necessary for the construction of structures at the Project site, most of which could not be readily recovered once committed to construction.

The proposed development of the Plan area would result in a permanent, irreversible change in the visual appearance of the site. The placement of impermeable surfaces in the Plan area (e.g., structures, parking areas, roadways, etc.) would also be regarded as a significant irreversible change associated with development of the proposed Plan.