

6.0 OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 GROWTH INDUCEMENT

State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.2 (d), requires that an EIR include a discussion of the growth inducing impacts on the project. The EIR must discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Projects that would remove obstacles to population growth are included. Increases in the population may tax existing community services, requiring construction of new facilities that could cause significant environmental effects. The EIR should also discuss the characteristics of some projects which may encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment either individually or cumulatively. It must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.

The proposed GPU and adoption of the Land Use Plan is growth inducing. Government Code Section 65300 requires each city and county to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and of any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning. The proposed Land Use Plan and GPU provide direction for future growth and facilitate development within the City and SOI. The GPU is growth inducing in that it will directly address new development that will result in an increase in population, which in turn will result in impacts on community services and community infrastructure.

Adoption of the GPU would have the following growth inducing effects.

6.1.1 LAND USE/POPULATION AND HOUSING

As discussed in Section 3.1 (Land Use and Planning) and Section 3.13 (Population and Housing), estimated 2030 population under the current SCAG projections for Lake Elsinore is 85,376. The buildout population of the Land Use Plan exceeds the SCAG population projections by 233,480. Buildout of the Land Use Plan is anticipated to be 94,616 households and 318,856 people assuming 3.37 persons per household.

The projected population is based on the land use categories and density assumptions included in the Land Use Plan. Though the projected population with buildout of both the incorporated and unincorporated portions of the GPU is 318,856, projected buildout for the incorporated area only is 209,756. This is in direct comparison with the adopted SCAG population forecast for 2030 of 85,376 in the incorporated area. The GPU population projections are considered consistent with the projections being considered by SCAG for several key reasons. First, the SCAG population forecast is not based upon buildout pursuant to the City's General Plan, but rather on projected annual growth rates; second, the greater range set forth in the GPU allows for greater flexibility in providing affordable housing, a state mandated program; and, third, the GPU will require a jobs-housing balance that meets or exceeds the regional goals.

The capacity associated with the population increase is not in and of itself an environmental impact. It is the secondary effects of the increased population that cause impacts on the environment. An increase in the number of people living in the City causes more houses to be built; a need for more jobs—as well as a need for more commercial/industrial/professional buildings to accommodate those jobs; increased traffic; and a greater demand for the construction of parks, public services, and street capacity. Please see Sections 3.4 (Transportation and Circulation), Section 3.14 (Public Services), Section 3.15 (Parks and Recreation) and Section 3.16 (Utilities and Service Systems) for a discussion of environmental impacts related to community services and traffic associated with implementation of the proposed GPU. As discussed in Section 3.4, implementation of the proposed GPU would result in an increase in traffic that would be mitigated by features of the proposed Circulation Element. As discussed in Sections 3.14, 3.15 and 3.16, impacts on various community services associated with proposed population growth would be mitigated through goals, policies and implementation programs identified in the proposed General Plan Update.

The proposed project establishes goals, policies and implementation programs that will reduce potential growth-related impacts. Compliance with these goals, policies and implementation programs and with federal, State and local regulatory requirements will assure that necessary services and infrastructure sufficient to serve the planned growth will be development over the projected buildout period of 20 years. Therefore, the proposed project will direct growth and development so that it occurs in a manner that is manageable for the City and avoids significant physical impacts that result from population growth.

6.1.2 TRANSPORTATION

In accordance with state law, the proposed GPU includes a Circulation Element that addresses the traffic and transportation needs of the City in connection with the Land Use Plan. As discussed in Chapter 3.4, the Circulation Section of the General Plan includes goals, policies and implementation programs regarding traffic circulation as well as specific circulation improvements that will address planned population growth. With implementation of the improvements proposed in the circulation element, it was concluded that all intersections and roadway segments within the City and the SOI would operate at acceptable levels of service at buildout of the GPU. In addition future projects will be required to conform to the GPU goals, policies and implementation programs and policies related to provision of an adequate circulation network and the street improvement projects from the Capital Improvement Program. Therefore, population growth anticipated by the GPU would not result in long-term adverse, significant, indirect impacts on traffic circulation once all general plan level improvements are constructed.

6.1.3 COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Sections 3.14, 3.15 and 3.16 address potential impacts from population increase and new development under the GPU and potential substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which

could cause significant environmental impacts. Provisions are included in the GPU goals and policies that are necessary to maintain acceptable service ratios or other performance objectives for parks, recreation, open space facilities, police services, fire protection, schools, libraries, water, wastewater, solid waste disposal, animal control, electrical, natural gas, and telecommunications services. With implementation of these goals and policies the population increase associated with the General Plan would not result in significant adverse indirect impacts related to community facilities.

6.2 UNAVOIDABLE SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Section 15126.2(b) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR describe potential environmental impacts that cannot be avoided, even with the implementation of feasible mitigation measures. Implementation of the GPU would result in the following significant and unavoidable project-related impacts.

6.2.1 TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

The City, County of Riverside, and Caltrans use different standards to define intersection deficiency. The majority of the study intersections are located within the City (and are thus subject to City criteria for intersection deficiency); four intersections are in the County of Riverside (subject to County criteria). Twelve intersections located on SR 74 have been evaluated based on Caltrans' LOS criteria.

The City of Lake Elsinore, in general, requires that peak-hour intersections operate at LOS "D" or better to be considered acceptable. Therefore, any City intersection operating at LOS "E" or LOS "F" will be considered deficient. However, LOS "E" will be considered acceptable in both the Main Street Overlay area and the Ballpark District Planning Districts in an effort to increase activity and revitalize these areas. Any intersection operating at LOS "F" will be considered deficient.

The Riverside County General Plan established, as a countywide target, a minimum LOS "C" on all County-maintained roads and conventional state highways. As an exception, LOS "D" may be allowed in Community Development areas, at intersections with any combination of Secondary Highways, Major Highways, Arterials, Urban Arterials, Expressways, conventional state highways, or freeway ramp intersections. LOS "E" may be allowed in designated community centers to the extent that it would support transit-oriented development and walkable communities.

Caltrans defines LOS "D" with delay less than 45 seconds per vehicle (mid-point of LOS "D") at signalized intersections to be acceptable; any delay longer than this is deficient.

At buildout of the proposed GPU in 2030, all study area intersections are projected to operate at acceptable LOS during the peak hours with improvements that are consistent with the proposed roadway system and the implementation of the GPU Circulation Element and Capital Improvements Program. Therefore, with implementation of the improvements and goals and

policies set forth by the Circulation Section of the Community Form Chapter and implementation of the City-wide Capital Improvements Program as a part of future development, impacts of the project on traffic levels would be reduced to less than significant.

However, the actual construction of the required intersection and roadway improvements cannot be determined with certainty. It is anticipated that as development that implements the proposed Land Use Plan proceeds, each development will pay for and construct general plan level road improvements on roads adjacent to the development sites. However, the timing of road improvements needed to improve level of service on a regional basis will be determined by the City of Lake Elsinore, other cities in western Riverside County, the County of Riverside and the Riverside County Transportation Commission based upon need and the availability of funding. Thus, it is possible that the required improvements will not be constructed in time to mitigate the proposed project's traffic and circulation impacts to below the level of significance. Therefore, the proposed project will cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections) and even after mitigation, project-related and cumulative impacts will remain significant and unavoidable.

6.2.2 NOISE

An increase in traffic volume throughout the local and regional circulation system as a result of GPU implementation has the potential to generate noise levels along roadway corridors that would exceed standards set forth in the Zoning Code and the General Plan's Noise and Land Use Compatibility Matrix and Interior and Exterior Noise Standards. The corridors of I-15, SR-74, and Railroad Canyon Road are particularly sensitive to additional traffic noise due to the substantial noise levels currently generated along these routes. At 2030 traffic levels associated with buildout of the GPU, the ADT on the freeways and roadways would increase. As shown by comparing **Figures 3.5-2 and 3.5-4**, the increase in traffic at GPU buildout would extend the 70 dBA, 65 dBA and 60dBA Ldn contours beyond existing conditions. As shown in **Table 3.5-4** and **Table 3.5-5**, residential uses are generally incompatible within the 65 Ldn contour. Considering that the 65 Ldn contour would extend beyond existing conditions, additional existing and planned residential areas in proximity to major public roadways could be subject to exterior noise levels that exceed City standards. As a result, traffic levels at buildout of the GPU could result in significant noise impacts on existing land uses.

The intent of the GPU and the Zoning Code is to provide relevant objectives, policies, and standards that would be applied to individual development projects to reduce the traffic noise associated with buildout of the GPU to a less-than-significant level. Many future development projects implemented pursuant to the policies of the GPU and zoning regulations will require project-level analysis of traffic noise impacts, and any related impacts will require project-specific mitigation to assure that receptors are not exposed to traffic noise exceeding allowable levels. However, in some cases where realignments or upgrades of roadways are proposed or traffic levels will increase substantially, such as that anticipated for I-15, Riverside Drive, and

Grand Avenue, there may be no mitigation that would adequately reduce future traffic noise as experienced by existing land uses or future development projects, leading to identification of significant and unmitigated impacts at the project level.

Developments implemented in accordance with the GPU have the potential to place new receptors in areas that would receive traffic noise (both existing and future) exceeding standards set forth in the Zoning Code and the General Plan's Noise and Land Use Compatibility Matrix and Interior and Exterior Noise Standards. GPU policy sets forth the City's intent to enforce the Zoning Code and other noise standards and to reduce traffic-related noise. Placement of new uses in areas subject to excessive traffic noise would be considered a significant impact.

On a programmatic basis, all noise impacts would be less than significant if GPU policies are followed. It is the ultimate intent of the GPU policies and the mitigation measures detailed above to reduce significant noise impacts for GPU and 3rd Street Annexation projects to less-than-significant levels. However, due to the programmatic level of noise analysis for this EIR it is impossible to make a definitive statement that all noise-related impacts associated with increased traffic noise on existing land uses and future development projects would be reduced to a less-than-significant level through policies proposed in the GPU. This increased traffic noise would be contributing to significant and unavoidable cumulative impacts.

6.2.3 AIR QUALITY

As shown in **Table 3.6-10, General Plan Buildout (2030) Daily Air Pollutant Emissions Estimates**, GPU buildout would drastically exceed project-level emissions thresholds established by the SCAQMD for all criteria pollutants resulting in significant adverse impacts. The goals, policies and implementation programs contained within the proposed GPU, including those listed in **Table 3.6-8, General Plan Air Quality Goals, Policies and Implementation Programs**, and in **Table 3.4-5, District Plan Transportation and Circulation Goals, Policies and Implementation Programs**, include measures that will reduce criteria pollutant emissions, including the reduction of vehicle trips through compatible land use planning, encouragement of alternative transportation methods, and improvement of traffic infrastructure to increase efficiency through coordination with regional and state governments. Future development projects in the City will be evaluated for conformance with the GPU policies related to air quality. These measures include cooperating with regional and state governments to develop mitigation measures region-wide, and reducing air quality emissions from future development. The regional and cumulative impacts on CO, NO_x, and O₃ concentrations related to conflicts or obstruction of the applicable air quality plan, violation of air quality standards set forth by the SCAQMD AQMP, and contributions to a cumulatively considerable net increase of a criteria pollutant in a nonattainment region would be considered significant.

The 2007 AQMP established a program to reduce the SCAB's emissions based on 2004 SCAG population projections. As discussed in Section 3.1 (Land Use and Planning) and Section 3.13

(Population and Housing) of this PEIR, the GPU would accommodate a population increase that surpasses current SCAG projections. The GPU would obstruct implementation of the AQMP by not contributing to its goals of regional reductions of air pollutant emissions in the region, and it would conflict with the AQMP in its inconsistency with AQMP projections for pollutant emissions. Control measures in the AQMP include: promotion of lighter color roofing and road materials; requiring clean fuels, supporting alternative fuels, and reducing petroleum dependency; pursuit of long-term advanced technologies measures; process modifications and improvements; best management practices; and market incentives. However, no mitigation is available that would make the GPU consistent with the AQMP and reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. This obstruction and conflict are a significant air quality impact that cannot be mitigated through implementation of the air quality-related measures set forth in the GPU.

Non-vehicular operational emissions resulting from activities associated with residential and nonresidential development anticipated under the GPU would incrementally add to total air emissions. Implementation of the policies set forth in the GPU would reduce operational emissions impacts associated with future development in the City; however, considering that the region is in federal and state nonattainment status for certain criteria pollutants, such policies do not ensure that future development and associated emissions will not continue to contribute to regional nonattainment status for these pollutants. As a result, the contribution of development and associated operational emissions anticipated with buildout of the GPU to violation of state and federal ambient air quality standards would be a significant impact on air quality.

6.2.4 CEQA FINDINGS AND STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS

CEQA FINDINGS

The CEQA Guidelines Section 15091 requires that:

No public agency shall approve or carry out a project for which an EIR has been certified which identifies one or more significant environmental effects of the project unless the public agency makes one or more written findings for each of those significant effects accompanied by a brief explanation of the finding. The possible findings are:

- (1) Changes or alterations have been required in or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the Final EIR.
- (2) Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and not the agency making the finding. Such changes have been adopted by such other agency or can and should be adopted by such other agency.

- (3) Specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including provision of employment opportunities for highly trained workers, make infeasible the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in the EIR.

The City will prepare these findings as a part of the Final EIR. As described in Sections 3.1 through 3.16 of this PEIR, potentially significant impacts have been identified for the following environmental issues:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Paleontological Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Material
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use & Planning (including Agricultural Resources)
- Noise
- Parks and Recreation
- Public Services
- Transportation and Circulation

A finding for each significant environmental effect identified in the EIR will be identified by the City.

STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS

The CEQA Guidelines Section 15093 requires that:

- (a) CEQA requires the decision making agency to balance, as applicable, the economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of a proposed project against its unavoidable environmental risks when determining whether to approve the project. If the specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, the adverse environmental effects may be considered “acceptable.”
- (b) When the lead agency approves a project which will result in the occurrence of significant effects which are identified in the Final EIR but are not avoided or

substantially lessened, the agency shall state in writing the specific reasons to support its action based on the Final EIR and/or other information in the record. The statement of overriding considerations shall be supported by substantial evidence in the record.

This PEIR identifies significant and unavoidable project-level and cumulative impacts related to Air Quality, Noise and Transportation and Circulation. If the City of Lake Elsinore determines that the benefits of the proposed project outweigh unmitigated significant environmental effects, it will prepare a Statement of Overriding Considerations addressing each significant and unavoidable environmental effect identified in the PEIR.

6.3 IRREVERSIBLE SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Pursuant to Section 15126.2 (c) of the State CEQA Guidelines, an environmental impact report must consider any significant irreversible environmental changes that would be caused by the proposed project should it be implemented. Section 15126.2 (c) reads as follows:

“Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also, irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.”

Implementation of the GPU would allow for residential, commercial, industrial, public institutional and other land uses consistent with the proposed Land Use Element. Future development would require the commitment of vacant parcels of land or redevelopment of existing development within the City. In addition to a commitment of land to specific land uses, the proposed project would result in a long-term, irreversible change in the visual character of the City and its SOI. The much of the current vacant land within the planning area would be transformed into developed property.

Construction and operation of land uses developed pursuant to the proposed Land Use Plan would contribute to the incremental depletion of renewable and non-renewable resources. Construction of these implementing projects will require the use of renewable resources such as lumber and other forest products, which could be expected to be replenished over the lifetime of the project. For example, lumber supplies are increased as seedlings mature into trees. As such, this development would not result in the irreversible commitment of renewable resources. Nevertheless, there would be an incremental increase in the demand for these resources during construction of development that implement the proposed project.

Construction will also result in the use of non-renewable resources including building materials (e.g., asphalt, petrochemical construction materials, steel, copper and other metals, and sand and gravel) and fossil fuels, including the use of fossil fuels for construction equipment, the transport of construction materials to the project site and the transportation of construction

workers to and from the project site (e.g., natural gas, gasoline, diesel fuel and other petroleum-based products). These materials and the resources used in their production are available in a finite supply and are generally not retrievable, although some of the materials are recyclable. Construction materials like concrete and asphalt, for example, can be crushed and recycled as road base. None of these materials are considered to be in short supply and unavailable for use in construction.

Following the completion of developments that implement the proposed Land Use Plan, there would be an irretrievable commitment of nonrenewable resources, such as energy resources and fossil fuels. These energy resources and fossil fuels would be used for heating and cooling of buildings, transportation of people and goods to and from the site, lighting, and other associated energy needs. To the extent that fossil fuels are used to generate electricity and fuel automobiles and trucks, the implementing developments would directly reduce existing supplies of fossil fuels and would be a long-term commitment to consumption of an essentially nonrenewable resource. The magnitude of this use will be offset partially by required compliance with California Building Code requirements and other energy conservation measures, and future increased use of renewable sources of electricity (e.g., solar power, wind power, hydroelectricity, and biomass).

IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Impacts would occur from the loss of open space and biological habitat located within the City and its SOI. An unavoidable significant adverse impact is the degradation of regional air quality caused by the cumulative effect of numerous projects in western Riverside County, including the City and its SOI.

Night lighting in the project vicinity would incrementally increase as a result of the proposed development. Implementation of the proposed project would result in less than significant adverse environmental effects to Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, and Utilities and Service Systems and therefore do not require mitigation measures. The following issue areas have potential environmental effects that can be mitigated to below the level of significance: Aesthetics, Biological Resources, Cultural and Paleontological Resources, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Material, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use & Planning (including Agricultural Resources), Parks and Recreation, Public Services.

Potential impacts upon Air Quality, Noise and Transportation and Circulation were found to be significant and cannot be mitigated to below the level of significance. A Statement of Overriding Consideration will be required for these issue areas.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE FROM ACCIDENTS

Implementation of the GPU would allow for residential, commercial, industrial, public institutional and other land uses consistent with the proposed Land Use Element. The development projects that implement the proposed Land Use Plan have the potential to emit

hazardous emissions from non-vehicular sources or to handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste. However, though compliance with adopted regulatory requirements, such land uses would not be expected to cause environmental accidents that would affect other areas. The project area is located within a seismically active region and would be exposed to ground shaking during a seismic event. In order to address the potential for moderate to severe ground-shaking that may occur during the lifetime of the proposed project, the future development will be required to comply with all adopted regulatory requirements including the engineering and design parameters set forth in the most recent edition of the UBC and/or the Structural Engineers Association of California parameters.