

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE OF THE EIR

In compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this report describes the environmental consequences of the Benicia Business Park (project) proposed for the development of approximately 527.8 acres in the City of Benicia. This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is designed to inform City of Benicia decision-makers, responsible agencies and the general public of the proposed project and the potential physical consequences of project approval. This EIR also examines alternatives to the proposed project and recommends mitigation measures to reduce or avoid potentially significant physical impacts. The City of Benicia is the Lead Agency for environmental review of the proposed project. This EIR will be used by the City of Benicia and the public in their review of the proposed project and associated approvals described in Chapter III.

B. PROPOSED PROJECT

The project considered in this EIR is a proposed Master Plan for a 527.8-acre site northeast of downtown Benicia located east of Industrial Way and north of East 2nd Street. The proposed Master Plan development would locate commercial development at the eastern end of the project site and industrial development in the central and western portions of the project site. The following actions, which are evaluated in this EIR, are proposed by the project sponsor:

- Subdivision of the 527.8-acre site into 80 lots (ranging in size from approximately 2.5 acres to 9 acres);
- Development of approximately 280 acres of limited industrial uses and development of approximately 35 acres of commercial uses;
- Provision of approximately 180 acres of open space, including a buffer strip to preserve the rural character of Lake Herman Road, and a “reach” of open space extending from Lake Herman Road to East 2nd Street around a major drainage;
- Installation of necessary infrastructure, including 10 acres of roadways, water, sewer and utilities; and
- Installation of two 1,000,000-gallon water tanks that would provide water supply for the proposed development.

Under the proposed Master Plan, a total of 280 acres would be developed for limited industrial uses, resulting in the construction of approximately 4,443,440 square feet of industrial building space. The Master Plan also includes construction of commercial use buildings on 35 acres of land located near the intersection of Lake Herman Road and East 2nd Street. The Master Plan would result in the construction of approximately 857,000 square feet of commercial building uses. A total of 5,300,440 square feet of building space would be developed at the project site as part of the project. For the purposes of the environmental analysis in this EIR, the project would directly result in the creation of 7,680 jobs.

Development of the Master Plan would require extensive grading to provide level building pads and to construct the proposed roadway system. An estimated 9 million cubic yards of soil would be excavated from the site and used for grading on-site. Cuts would be up to 100 feet deep where hills are proposed for removal and fills, mostly in swales, would be 30 to 50 feet deep. The major portion of the onsite grading would occur on the western, southern, and eastern portions of the site.

C. EIR SCOPE

The City of Benicia circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) notifying responsible agencies and interested parties that an EIR would be prepared for the project and indicating the environmental topics anticipated to be addressed in this EIR. The NOP was published on July 6, 2005. The NOP was mailed to public agencies, organizations, and individuals likely to be interested in the potential impacts of the project. Comments on the NOP were received by the City and considered during preparation of the EIR. A scoping session for the Draft EIR was held as a public meeting before the Planning Commission on July 14, 2005. A total of eight comment letters regarding the NOP were received in addition to the verbal comments by six individuals and the City of Benicia Planning Commission at the public hearing. A copy of the NOP and the comment letters received are included in Appendix A of this EIR.

The following environmental topics are addressed as separate sections in this EIR:

- Land Use and Planning Policy
- Population, Employment and Housing
- Geology, Soils and Seismicity
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Biological Resources
- Transportation and Circulation
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Visual Resources
- Cultural and Paleontological Resources
- Public Services
- Utilities and Infrastructure
- Urban Decay

D. REPORT ORGANIZATION

This EIR is organized into the following chapters:

- *Chapter I – Introduction:* Discusses the overall EIR purpose, provides a summary of the proposed project and the environmental impact report scope, and summarizes the organization of the EIR.
- *Chapter II – Summary:* Provides a summary of the proposed project and the impacts that would result from implementation of the proposed project, and describes mitigation measures recommended to reduce or avoid significant impacts. A discussion of alternatives to the proposed project is also provided.
- *Chapter III – Project Description:* Provides a description of the project site, site development history, project objectives, required approval process, and details of the project itself.
- *Chapter IV – Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures:* Describes the following for each environmental technical topic: existing conditions (setting); potential environmental impacts and their level of significance; and measures to mitigate identified impacts. Potential adverse impacts are identified by levels of significance, as follows: less-than-significant impact (LTS), significant impact (S), and significant and unavoidable impact (SU). The significance of each impact (after mitigation) is categorized before and after implementation of any recommended mitigation measure(s).
- *Chapter V – Alternatives:* Provides an evaluation of three alternatives to the proposed project in addition to the No Project alternative.
- *Chapter VI – CEQA Required Assessment Conclusions:* Provides additional specifically-required analyses of the proposed project's growth-inducing effects, significant irreversible changes, cumulative impacts, and effects found not to be significant.
- *Chapter VII – Report Preparation:* Identifies preparers of the EIR, references used and persons and organizations contacted.

