

## 5.0

# OTHER SECTIONS REQUIRED BY CEQA

This section of the EIR discusses the long-term implications of the proposed project as required by CEQA. The topics discussed in this section include growth-inducing impacts, significant unavoidable environmental effects, significant irreversible environmental changes and irretrievable commitment of resources. The discussion in this section is based on information found in the *County of San Benito General Plan* (1994) and the project application materials.

## 5.1 GROWTH INDUCING IMPACTS

### ***CEQA Requirements***

Public Resources Code Section 21100(b) (5) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) require a discussion in the EIR of the growth-inducing impacts of a proposed project. The EIR must discuss the ways in which the project may directly or indirectly foster economic or population growth or additional housing in the surrounding environment, remove obstacles to growth, tax existing community services facilities, or encourage or facilitate other activities that cause significant environmental effects, either individually or cumulatively. Direct growth-inducing impacts result when the development associated with a project directly induces population growth or the construction of other development within the same geographic area. The analysis of potential growth-inducing impacts includes a determination of whether a project would remove physical obstacles to population growth. This often occurs with the extension of infrastructure facilities that can provide services to new development. In addition to direct growth-inducing impacts, an EIR must also discuss growth-inducing effects that will result indirectly from the project, by serving as catalysts for future unrelated development in an area. Development of public institutions and the introduction of employment opportunities within the same geographic area are examples of projects that may result in growth-inducing impacts.

An EIR's discussion of growth-inducing effects should not assume that growth is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment. An EIR is required to discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster growth. However, it is not required to forecast and mitigate the environmental effects of development described as induced growth.

## ***Standards of Significance***

CEQA Guidelines Appendix G indicates that a project may have significant growth-inducing impacts if the project would induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (e.g., by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (e.g., through extension of roads or other infrastructure).

## ***Analysis***

### **Precedent for Future Development**

The approval of the proposed project would not represent a new commitment of rural lands for urban development. Urban development of the project site has been envisioned by the County since 1989, when the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 89-92, which designated this site in the County's General Plan (as part of a larger 558-acre area) as an Area of Special Study. This area was deemed appropriate for urban development due to its location contiguous with other existing and planned urban uses, the relative lack of natural resources or environmental hazards that could otherwise constrain development, and the opportunities it presents for higher density development, provided future development is guided by a comprehensive plan for public services and resource conservation. As stated in the General Plan, Land Use Element, the Area of Special Study designation "applies to areas of the County where a combination of the following criteria apply: 1) More concentrated development than is presently allowed may be desirable provided a comprehensive plan for public services and resource conservation is integrated in order of priority into a specific plan, community plan, or area plan; 2) As a result of prior, piecemeal subdivisions, a plan for integrated development and coordination of governmental services and/or community facilities is desirable; and 3) The County has identified the area as a potential area for commercial, industrial and/or residential development." As discussed in **Section 3.9, Land Use and Planning**, the project is consistent with the Area of Special Study land use designation criteria.

Therefore, approval of the project would not represent the first decision in favor of extending urban development into this non-urbanized area, and would not induce further outward urban expansion beyond this special study area by way of setting a precedent for such outward growth.

### **Precedent for Suburban-Density Development in the Unincorporated County**

The approval of the proposed project would not represent the first time that suburban-density development has been approved in the unincorporated areas of San Benito County. Several previous projects, including, without limitation, Ridgemark Golf Course, Cielo Vista Estates, Oak Creek, Quail Hollow, Riverside Estates, Ashford Highlands, and most recently, Santana Ranch, were approved by the County and developed (or are planned for development in the case of Santana Ranch) within the past 20 to 30 years. Since approval of the project would not represent the first suburban-density project in San Benito County, it would not induce growth by way of setting a precedent for similar development in the unincorporated area of the County.

### **Growth Induced By Increased Infrastructure Capacity and Extension of Infrastructure**

#### Water Infrastructure

As discussed in **Section 3.15, Wet and Dry Utilities and Energy**, the project would connect to the existing water main located in Fairview Road, and water infrastructure would be sized to serve the project only. Therefore, the project's proposed water infrastructure would not induce growth since it is not extending infrastructure beyond the project site nor is it sizing the infrastructure beyond what is needed to serve the project.

#### Wastewater Infrastructure

New sewer mains would be required in order to connect the project site to the City of Hollister Domestic Wastewater Treatment Plant (DWTP). As discussed in **Section 3.15**, the DWTP has been identified in the draft Hollister Wastewater Master Plan as the regional facility that would provide wastewater treatment capacity to properties within the City and adjacent areas (Hollister urban area), including the project site.

Two wastewater service options have been evaluated in this EIR to connect the project site to the City's existing sewer main on Enterprise Road. The first option entails installing a connection from Enterprise Road east, to the existing sewer main within the Cielo Vista residential subdivision. The existing sewer main within this subdivision has the capacity to accommodate existing flows from that subdivision as well as flows generated by the proposed project. A new pipeline segment from Cielo Vista to Enterprise Road would be constructed to connect the project to the existing main. Under this first option, the project would not be growth-inducing in this regard, because the Hollister Wastewater Master Plan contemplates an extension of service to the Hollister urban area, including the project site, and the infrastructure is already sized to accommodate only the wastewater needs of existing Cielo Vista residences and the proposed project.

The second option entails installing a sewer main within Fairview Road and Airline Highway to connect with the existing sewer main located on Enterprise Road. The proposed project would size the Fairview Road and Airline Highway main to accommodate only the project's sewer requirements. If the second option is implemented, the proposed project has the potential to encourage future growth within the City of Hollister Sphere of Influence along Airline Highway between the Cielo Vista residential subdivision and Enterprise Road in unincorporated San Benito County, by placing a wastewater line where none currently exists, despite sizing. However, this growth has already been contemplated in the General Plans of the City and the County. Therefore, the project would not remove potential obstacles to growth that have not already been anticipated.

### Road Improvements and Access Infrastructure

The project includes internal neighborhood streets and an extension of Cielo Vista Drive on to the project site as a collector street. The Fairview Corners Specific Plan, which would guide development of the project, includes policy provisions for open-space connections between neighborhood streets and the adjoining undeveloped property to the north and south of the project site. These open-space areas could be used in the future to extend a roadway north to the adjacent parcel, should development on the adjacent parcel be proposed consistent with the Area of Special Study land use designation.

Off-site roadway and intersection improvements associated with the project are designed to handle capacity resulting from buildout of the City of Hollister General Plan, and the County General Plan, and, as discussed in **Section 3.14, Transportation**, are consistent with planned traffic improvements identified in the Regional Transportation Plan (SBCOG 2010). However, the project's transportation facility improvements would only provide additional capacity to accommodate planned growth; would be consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan; and would not remove potential obstacles to growth that have not already been anticipated by the City of Hollister and San Benito County General Plans.

### **Stimulus for Economic Growth**

The proposed project is a residential project. Residential uses are typically not associated with direct economic growth because these uses do not create new permanent employment opportunities, as compared with industrial or commercial uses. Residential development is generally considered a product rather than a cause of economic growth. However, during the construction phase, temporary jobs would be created and others supported through the purchase of materials. The residential uses would also have a minor secondary economic effect resulting from the anticipated consumer demand for goods and services by project residents.

### **Removal of Obstacles to Growth**

The proposed project would place development and infrastructure near the southern boundary of the Area of Special Study identified in the County General Plan. The proposed project has the potential to encourage future growth on vacant land on approximately 334 acres of land located between the project site and the Santana Ranch project to the north. This land is also located within the County's Area of Special Study, but no development is currently proposed. In addition, the proposed project has the potential to encourage growth in about 200 acres of vacant land on or near Fairview Road and Airline Highway, within the City of Hollister Sphere of Influence. The Sphere of Influence has been identified by the City as an area for potential urban development. Similarly, the Area of Special Study has been identified by the County as an area of potential urban development.

The project would result in the conversion of the project site from rural uses to suburban uses, and could potentially influence the type of development that would occur on this vacant land, in that market decisions may be influenced by the presence of residential uses on both sides of Fairview Road. Therefore, the project could facilitate additional development to the north of the project site and within the remaining areas of the City's Sphere of Influence in the vicinity of the project site. However, it is also anticipated that, over time, the Fairview Road corridor would be further developed, with or without the proposed project, consistent with the County's Area of Special Study designation for lands east of Fairview Road, and consistent with the County's or the City of Hollister's urban land use designations for lands west of the roadway.

The increased residential density and additional infrastructure on and near the project site and the Santana Ranch site could influence owners of the property between these two projects to consider proposing similar land use changes. Therefore, the project could remove some economic obstacles to growth and hasten the development of these areas.

### **Population and Housing Growth**

According to updated Census data provided by AMBAG, the population estimate for unincorporated San Benito County in 2010 was 62,431 persons. The proposed project would result in a population increase of up to approximately 678 persons (based on 3.08 persons per household, Department of Finance 2010). The approved Santana Ranch Specific Plan (1,092 housing units) to the north and Gavilan San Benito College Campus 70 residential units for a combined total of 1,162 dwelling units, which would equate to about 3,579 people. These two projects, along with the proposed project, would contribute to a total increase in population of about 4,257 persons over a period of five to 16 years. The AMBAG population forecast for the unincorporated San Benito County for 2020 is an estimated 24,720 persons, and for 2025 is estimated to be 26,671. Over the next 15 years, AMBAG forecasts indicate that the County population should grow by about 7,600 people. The proposed project's individual and

cumulative contribution to population growth is consistent with the forecast. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in population growth that exceeds regional population forecasts for unincorporated San Benito County.

In summary, the project would not result in significant growth inducement by way of setting a precedent for similar projects, by creating excess infrastructure capacities, by stimulating significant economic growth, or by generating significant additional demand for housing.

## 5.2 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

### ***CEQA Requirements***

Public Resources Code Section 21100(b)(2)(A) requires an EIR to include a detailed statement setting forth any significant adverse unavoidable environmental impacts. Significant adverse effects that cannot be mitigated must be described as well as effects that can be mitigated but not reduced to a level of insignificance (CEQA Guidelines § 15126.2(b)). If significant unavoidable impacts cannot be reduced or avoided without changing the design of the project, the EIR must describe the reasons the project is being proposed despite the significant unavoidable impacts. CEQA Guidelines § 15126.2(b).

CEQA Guidelines section 15093(a) allows the decision-making agency (County of San Benito) to balance, as applicable, the economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of a project against its unavoidable environmental risks when determining whether to approve the project. CEQA Guidelines section 15093(b) states that when the lead agency approves a project despite the occurrence of significant unavoidable impacts, the agency shall adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations, which sets forth in writing the specific reasons that support its action. The Statement of Overriding Considerations shall be supported by substantial evidence in the record. Substantial evidence includes facts, reasonable assumptions predicated upon facts and expert opinions supported by facts. Substantial evidence is not argument, speculation, unsubstantiated opinion or narrative, evidence that is clearly inaccurate or erroneous, or evidence of social or economic impacts that do not contribute to or are not caused by physical impacts in the environment.

### ***Analysis***

Based on the environmental analysis provided in **Chapter 3.0 of this EIR**, most of the potential impacts associated with the proposed project can be avoided or reduced to a level of insignificance through the imposition of mitigation measures. However, the project would result in significant unavoidable impacts to noise and area traffic and circulation.



## Noise

Receptors on and off the site would be subject to temporary noise generated by construction that both exposes sensitive receptors to unacceptable noise and lasts for more than 12 months. Mitigation measures are available to reduce the impacts, but not to a less than significant level. As a result these construction impacts are considered significant and unavoidable. Please see Section 3.11 for a discussion of these impacts.

## Traffic and Circulation

A number of roadway intersections and two highway segments within the Hollister area will be impacted by the proposed project. Most of these intersections and the two highway segments will be improved using traffic impact fees collected from the project by the County, or by funds collected through the establishment of benefit areas for the intersection improvements not included in the TIF. Because improvements to these intersections and highway segments may not be implemented in time to mitigate the immediate project impacts to these intersections, however, project impacts must be considered to be significant and unavoidable. Please see Section 3.14, Traffic and Circulation, for a detailed discussion of these impacts.

## 5.3 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

### *CEQA Requirements*

Public Resources Code Section 21100(b)(2)(B) requires an EIR to include a detailed statement setting forth any significant effects on the environment that would be irreversible if a proposed project is implemented. Examples of irreversible environmental changes, as set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c), include the following:

- The proposed project would involve a large commitment of nonrenewable resources such that removal or nonuse thereafter is unlikely;
- The primary and secondary impacts of a proposed project would generally commit future generations to similar uses (e.g., a highway providing access to a previously inaccessible area); or
- The proposed project involves uses in which irreversible damage could result from any potential environmental accidents associated with the proposed project.

Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

## ***Analysis***

The proposed project, as a typical residential development, does not involve uses in which irreversible damage could result from any potential environmental accidents associated therewith. However, the development of the project would permanently alter site topography. While relatively minor, this topographical alteration would represent a permanent change since it would be infeasible to return the site to its existing topography. The construction of the proposed uses, including the residential areas, the project infrastructure, and the park and recreational facilities would also represent permanent changes. In addition, the project would include the consumption of non-renewable building materials and energy resources during the construction phase, as well as the ongoing consumption of energy for lighting, air conditioning, space and water heating, and travel to and from the site during the life of the project. However, the consumption of such resources is typical of this type of development and would be reduced to the extent feasible by the implementation of a number of sustainable building and design features as set forth in the Specific Plan. While these changes would be permanent, it is anticipated that the project would include the production of a mix of housing types to serve the needs of a range of households, as well as contribute to community amenities in the form of complementary housing opportunities for the adjacent Gavilan College San Benito Campus, and park and recreational facilities that tie into the adjacent campus facility.

## **5.4 EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT**

A significant effect on the environment is generally defined as a substantial or potentially substantial adverse change in the physical environment (CEQA Guidelines § 15382). The term “environment” means the physical conditions, both natural and man-made, which exist within the area that will be affected by a proposed project, including land, air, water, animals, flora, fauna, ambient noise and objects of historic or aesthetic significance; the area involved shall be the area in which significant effects would occur either directly or indirectly as a result of the proposed project (CEQA Guidelines § 15360).

Detailed analysis and discussion of environmental topics found to be significant are provided within **Chapter 3.0 of this EIR**. Listed below are those environmental effects that were determined not to be significant and therefore not discussed in detail in the EIR (Pub. Res. Code § 21100(c); CEQA Guidelines § 15128).



## **Mineral Resources**

Mineral resource impacts are considered significant if the proposed project would result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and to the residents of the state or of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local General Plan, Specific Plan, or other land use plan. According to the San Benito County General Plan, there are no significant mineral resources or mining operations within the project site. Since there is no evidence of any mineral resources on the project site, and therefore implementation of the proposed project would not result in the loss of access to, or availability of, a known mineral resource that would be of value to the county, region, or state, this topic was not evaluated further.

## **Noise**

A project may result in significant impacts if it would expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels when the project is located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, or within the vicinity of a private airstrip. The Hollister Municipal Airport, which supports general aviation activities, is located more than three miles from the project site. Due to the project site's location, it is not within the San Benito County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. There are no private airstrips within two miles of the project site. Therefore, this topic was not evaluated further.

## **Air Traffic Patterns**

A project may result in significant impacts if it would result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks. As noted previously, the proposed project site is not located within two miles of any airport or airstrip and subsequently is not located within a flight path. Therefore, this topic was not evaluated further.

## **Additional Topic Areas**

In addition to the above-referenced topics, there are a number of other topic areas noted throughout the Draft EIR where no further evaluation was included in this Draft EIR since these topic areas would not apply to the project and would not otherwise be relevant to the environmental analysis. These topic areas include, without limitation, those involving Williamson Act/Farmland Security Zone, forestland, hazardous materials sites, 100-year flood plains, risks associated with being near a levee/dam, risks associated with seiche, tsunami or mudflow, the disruption/division of an established community, conflicts with HCP or NCCP, and groundborne noise.

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