

CHAPTER 2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

This environmental impact report (EIR) examines the potentially significant effects on the environment resulting from The Village at Loomis (proposed project). The proposed project consists of the following components:

- 56,000 square feet of commercial uses
- 25,000 square feet of office uses
- Up to 426 dwelling units
- Two passive parks totaling 1.25 acres, two active parks totaling 0.6 acre, and open space totaling 10.13 acres

2.2 PURPOSE AND INTENDED USE OF THIS EIR

The Town of Loomis (Town) prepared this EIR in compliance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.), the CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) 15000 et seq.), and Title 15 of the Town of Loomis Municipal Code. As provided under CEQA, an EIR is a tool for disclosing to the general public, the local community, responsible agencies, trustee agencies and other interested public agencies, and the Town’s decision-making bodies (Planning Commission and Town Council) the potential significant environmental effects resulting from implementation of the proposed project, as well as possible measures to mitigate those significant effects and alternatives to the proposed project that could avoid impacts.

This EIR is intended to provide Town decision makers, other agencies, and the public with information that enables them to consider the environmental consequences of the proposed project. The document identifies significant or potentially significant environmental effects (“impacts”) and ways in which those impacts can be reduced to less-than-significant levels, whether through implementation of mitigation measures adopted by the lead agency or through implementation of an alternative to the project. In a practical sense, an EIR functions as a method of fact-finding, allowing a project applicant, the public, other public agencies, and agency staff an opportunity to collectively review and evaluate baseline conditions and project impacts through a process of full disclosure. Additionally, this EIR provides the primary source of environmental information for the lead agency to consider when exercising any permitting authority or approval power directly related to implementation of this project.

2.3 TYPE OF EIR

This EIR provides a project-level analysis for the proposed project that focuses primarily on the changes in the environment that would result from construction or operation of the project (14 CCR 15168).

2.4 LEAD, RESPONSIBLE, AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

As required by CEQA, this EIR defines lead, responsible, and trustee agencies. The Town is the lead agency for the project because it holds principal responsibility for approving the project. A responsible agency is a public agency other than the lead agency that has discretionary approval over the project. The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board is a responsible agency for this project. A trustee agency is defined as a state agency that has jurisdiction by law over natural resources that are held in trust for the people of the state. For example, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife is a trustee agency with respect to this project and its potential effects on resources regulated under the California Fish and Game Code.

2.5 SCOPE OF THE EIR

The scope of this EIR includes analysis of environmental issues identified as potentially significant in the Notice of Preparation (NOP) and submitted as comments on the NOP (see Appendix A for the NOP and comment letters in response to the NOP). All of the following environmental resource areas are evaluated in this EIR:

- Land Use
- Population and Housing
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Visual Resources
- Transportation
- Noise
- Air Quality
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Geology, Soils, and Seismicity
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Public Services and Utilities (including recreational facilities)
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials

No impacts related to mineral resources would occur, and thus, this topic is not addressed in this EIR. There are no known mineral resources located on site; the site is not zoned for mineral extraction (Town of Loomis 2001).

This EIR evaluates the direct impacts, reasonably foreseeable indirect impacts, and cumulative impacts resulting from planning, construction, and operation of the proposed project using the most current information available and in accordance with the provisions set forth in the CEQA Guidelines. In addition, the EIR recommends potentially feasible mitigation measures, where possible, and project alternatives that would reduce or eliminate significant adverse environmental effects.

The alternatives chapter of the EIR (Chapter 5, Project Alternatives) was prepared in accordance with Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines. The alternatives analyzed in this EIR in addition to the proposed project are as follows:

Alternative 1a: No Project/No Build Alternative. This alternative assumes that no development would occur and the site would remain unchanged from its current condition.

Alternative 1b: No Project/Existing Designations Alternative. This alternative assumes that development would occur under the existing General Plan and Zoning designations for the project site. The existing General Plan designations for the site provide for 23.6 acres of Residential – Medium Density, 29.7 acres of General Commercial, 5.3 acres of Central Commercial (Town Center Commercial), and 7.8 acres of Office Professional.

Alternative 2: Transportation Alternative. This alternative contemplates realigning Webb Street through the project site and constructing roundabouts instead of traditional intersections, consistent with the road network described in the Town’s draft General Plan Circulation Element update. The project would be developed as proposed except for the alterations to the road network on the western portion of the project site.

Alternative 3a: Reduced Density. This alternative assumes development of 371 residences (246 single-family units and up to 125 multiple-family units), 50,000 square feet of commercial space, and 22,500 square feet of office uses. The commercial and office space omitted under this alternative and some of the residences omitted under this alternative would be replaced with passive and active park space. This alternative would reduce the proposed commercial and office development by approximately 10% and reduce the average single-family residential land use density to seven dwelling units per acre (compared to the proposed project’s average single-family density of 7.7 dwelling units per acre) while also meeting the requirements for park space identified in the Town of Loomis General Plan and under the Quimby Act. This alternative would provide for 35.14 acres of residential development and 5.36 acres of active and passive

park space on site. Development would occur within the same general footprint as the proposed project and with the same road alignment as proposed.

Alternative 3b: Reduced Density/Transportation. This alternative combines the Webb Street alignment considered under Alternative 2 with the reduced density alternative. It evaluates the same land uses as the reduced density alternative and includes the Webb Street alignment and roundabouts reflected in the Town’s draft General Plan Circulation Element.

Alternative 4a: Reduced Footprint. This alternative assumes a reduced development footprint and increased amounts of parks and open space while keeping development densities generally the same as the proposed project. This alternative contemplates development of 366 residential units (including 125 multiple-family units), 45,000 square feet of commercial space, 10,000 square feet of office uses, and 5.2 acres of active park land.

Alternative 4b: Reduced Footprint/Transportation. This alternative combines the Webb Street alignment considered under Alternative 2 with the reduced footprint alternative. It evaluates the same land uses as the reduced footprint alternative and includes the Webb Street alignment and roundabouts reflected in the Town’s draft General Plan Circulation Element.

2.6 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

This EIR has been prepared to meet all of the substantive and procedural requirements of CEQA. As the lead agency, the Town has primary responsibility for conducting the environmental review and approving or denying the project. The Town may use this EIR to approve the proposed project, make findings regarding identified impacts, and, if necessary, adopt a statement of overriding considerations regarding these impacts.

Notice of Preparation

To initiate the EIR process, the Town circulated an NOP to solicit agency and public comments on the scope of the environmental analysis to be included in the EIR. The public review period for the NOP began on November 13, 2014, and comments were received through December 16, 2014. The NOP was submitted to the County Clerk and the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research State Clearinghouse and posted on the Town’s website for a 30-day public review period.

A public scoping session was held by the Town on December 2, 2014. The purposes of this scoping session were to provide the public and governmental agencies with information on the proposed project and the CEQA process and to give attendees an opportunity to identify environmental issues that should be considered in the EIR. Verbal comments were received from four members of the public at this meeting. Attendees were also invited to mail or email their comment letters to the Town during the NOP public review period.

The Town received 13 comment letters, which included comments from the Office of Planning and Research, Native American Heritage Commission, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Department of Transportation, Placer County Water Agency, Rocklin Unified School District, City of Rocklin, Pacific Gas & Electric, Placer Mosquito & Vector Control District, Placer County Air Pollution Control District, South Placer Municipal Utility District, Kurt Sandhoff, and Don Ross.

Draft EIR

The Draft EIR is subject to a 45-day public review period. In accordance with Section 15087 of the CEQA Guidelines, the Town published a Notice of Availability of the Draft EIR at the same time it submitted a Notice of Completion and copies of the Draft EIR to the State Clearinghouse to initiate the public review period. Comments on the adequacy of the Draft EIR and the Town's compliance with CEQA may be submitted in writing to the Town, as lead agency, prior to the end of the public review period. During the public review period, the Town's Planning Commission will hold a public workshop to receive public comments on the Draft EIR.

Final EIR

Following the close of the public review period for this Draft EIR, the Town will prepare a Final EIR, which will include written responses to all comments received during the Draft EIR public review period. The Final EIR will consist of the Draft EIR, comments received during the public review period, responses to those comments, and any revisions to the Draft EIR as a result of agency comments and public comments. The Final EIR must be certified before it can be used as the basis for decision making.

Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Section 15091, no public agency shall approve or carry out a project for which a certified EIR identifies one or more significant effects of that project unless the public agency makes one or more of the following findings, which must be supported by substantial evidence in the record:

- Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project that avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the Final EIR.
- 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.
- Specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations make the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in the Final EIR unfeasible.

CEQA requires that the Town Council first certify the Final EIR before considering whether to approve the proposed project and make the required findings to approve the proposed project if the EIR finds that the project would result in a significant environmental impact.

Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

Pursuant to Section 15097 of the CEQA Guidelines, if the Town Council approves the proposed project and the EIR identifies significant impacts and mitigation measures, the Town must adopt a mitigation monitoring and reporting program (MMRP). The purpose of the MMRP is to ensure compliance with required mitigation during implementation of the project. An MMRP defines the requirements for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of revisions to the project or compliance with conditions of approval that the lead agency has required as mitigation measures to lessen or avoid significant environmental effects. The MMRP will be prepared concurrently with the Final EIR.

EIR Adequacy

The level of detail contained in this EIR is consistent with Section 15151 of the CEQA Guidelines, which states the following:

An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of the environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in the light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The courts have looked not for perfection but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure.

2.7 DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

This EIR was designed for easy use and reference. To help the reader locate information of particular interest, a brief summary of the contents of each section of the EIR is provided:

- **Executive Summary (Chapter 1)** – Includes a summary of impacts and mitigation measures proposed by the project in a table format.
- **Introduction (Chapter 2)** – Provides a brief background description for the project and description of the EIR, including its purpose, intended use, type, scope, and standards for adequacy; and identification of lead, responsible, and trustee agencies; a description of the environmental review process; and a summary of how the document is organized.

- **Project Description (Chapter 3)** – Includes a discussion of the project site; a statement of project objectives; a general description of the project site’s environmental characteristics, including proposed plans for development; and required agency approvals.
- **Environmental Analysis (Chapter 4)** – Includes a topic-by-topic analysis of baseline environmental conditions without the project and impacts that would or could result from development of the project. It also identifies potentially feasible mitigation measures that, if adopted, would reduce the level of significance of environmental impacts. The results of field visits, and data collection, and the findings of technical reports are included in the analysis.
- **Project Alternatives (Chapter 5)** – Includes an assessment of alternative methods for accomplishing most of the basic objectives of the proposed project while avoiding or substantially lessening at least one significant impact of the project. This assessment provides information for decision makers to make a reasoned choice among potentially feasible alternatives based on comparing the impacts of the alternatives to the impacts of the proposed project.
- **CEQA-Required Sections (Chapter 6)** – Includes a discussion of additional issues required by CEQA, including significant unavoidable adverse impacts, irreversible environmental changes, growth inducement, and energy consumption. The analysis of cumulative impacts is included in the technical analysis contained in Chapter 4.
- **References (Chapter 7)** – Provides the complete citations for documents cited in the EIR.
- **EIR Preparation (Chapter 8)** – Lists the organizations and individuals involved in the preparation of the EIR.
- **Appendices** – Contain reference items and reports providing support and documentation of the analysis performed in the EIR.

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