

I INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) provides an assessment of the potential environmental consequences of adoption and implementation of the proposed Butte County General Plan 2030 and Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) override. This assessment is intended to inform county residents, decision-makers, and responsible and trustee agencies of the nature of General Plan 2030 and the ALUCP override, and their effect on the environment. This EIR was prepared in accordance with and in fulfillment of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements. Butte County is the Lead Agency for this EIR.

A. Proposed Action

The proposed project is a comprehensive update of the existing Butte County General Plan, as well as the associated override of the ALUCP. The General Plan is the principal policy document for future conservation and development in the county, and it has a 20-year planning horizon. Because General Plan 2030 includes densities that are not consistent with the Airport Land Use Compatibility Zones in the ALUCP, adoption of this document requires an override of the ALUCP.¹ The proposed project is described in a greater level of detail in Chapter 3.

B. EIR Scope, Issues, and Concerns

This document is a countywide Program EIR² that analyzes potential environmental impacts of the adoption of the proposed General Plan 2030 and

¹ As used throughout this document, the term “ALUCP override,” and like terminology, refers to Public Utilities Code Section 21676, which requires the Butte County General Plan be in conformance with the ALUCP, unless the Board of Supervisors makes specific findings to overrule the ALUCP, or portions of it, with a two-thirds vote.

² CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(a) defines a Program EIR as an EIR prepared for a broad-scale visioning document, such as a General Plan, that provides a framework for specific projects to develop according to the desired land use pattern.

ALUCP override. Program EIRs are not project-specific and do not evaluate the impacts of specific development ‘projects’ that may be proposed under General Plan 2030. Such projects will require separate environmental review to secure the necessary development entitlement. This EIR is intended, where appropriate, to be used as a first-tier environmental document for future projects, but it is not intended to address impacts of individual development projects.³

Tiering subsequent development projects from this EIR will be guided by CEQA Guidelines Section 15183. Some air quality, noise, population and housing, public services and recreation, transportation and circulation, utilities, and greenhouse gas emissions evaluations are based on quantitative analyses and may be used to satisfy the criteria established by 15183(b)(4)(c) to limit examination of these environmental effects in subsequent initial studies.

The exact location and extent of construction that may be allowed by General Plan 2030 is not known at this time. Some analyses in this EIR are qualitative in nature. As part of the CEQA process, future development projects will be required to provide full quantitative analyses of their impacts. In addition, place-specific analysis, including impacts “peculiar to the project or the parcel on which the project would be located”⁴ must be addressed in subsequent CEQA documents.

CEQA Statutes and Guidelines, including Section 15183, will guide when and how subsequent development projects may be tiered from this EIR. As noted above, this EIR provides a quantitative analysis of projected 2030 buildout conditions for the following impact categories: air quality, noise, population and housing, public services and recreation, transportation and circulation,

³ As stated in Section 15152 of the CEQA Guidelines, “tiering” refers to: using the analysis contained in a broader EIR (such as one prepared for a general plan), with later EIRs and negative declarations tied to narrower projects; incorporating by reference the general discussions from the broader EIR; and concentrating the later EIR or negative declaration on the issues specific only to the later project.

⁴ CEQA Guidelines Section 15183(b)(1).

utilities, and greenhouse gas emissions. This analysis may be used to satisfy criteria found in CEQA Guidelines Section 15183(c) for reliance on a certified General Plan EIR, for the purpose of evaluating projected 2030 buildout conditions.

This EIR also identifies 26 significant and unavoidable impacts resulting from implementation of General Plan 2030 and the ALCUP override. CEQA Guidelines Section 15183(c) states: “If an impact is not peculiar to the parcel or to the project, has been addressed as a significant effect in the prior EIR, or can be substantially mitigated by the imposition of uniformly applied development policies or standards... then an additional EIR need not be prepared for the [subsequent] project solely on the basis of that [previously-identified] impact.” This EIR identifies uniformly applied development policies and standards included in General Plan 2030 that are found to substantially mitigate identified impacts. Subsequent development projects may also use these uniformly applied development policies and standards to mitigate impacts.

However, not all activities contemplated and enabled by General Plan 2030 are subject to subsequent environmental review. Typically, ministerial, or non-discretionary activities, such as building permits, encroachment permits, and basic maintenance activities, are not ‘projects’ as defined by CEQA Guidelines Section 15378. Therefore, a single-family home could be constructed without CEQA review. Categorical or statutory exemptions from future environmental review are listed in Articles 18 and 19 of CEQA (PRC 15260 et seq.), and these exemptions remain unchanged with the adoption of General Plan 2030.

As indicated in Section 15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines, some ministerial and non-discretionary activities do require subsequent environmental review where the activity is located in a particularly sensitive environment. This EIR discloses the programmatic impacts associated with ministerial and exempt activities enabled by General Plan 2030, such as building permits, with the qualification that subsequent environmental review may be required if located in a particularly sensitive environment.

The scope of this EIR was established by Butte County through the General Plan 2030 process. Environmental issues addressed in this EIR include the following:

1. Aesthetics
2. Agriculture
3. Air Quality
4. Biological Resources
5. Cultural Resources
6. Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
7. Hazards and Safety
8. Hydrology and Water Quality
9. Land Use
10. Noise
11. Population and Housing
12. Public Services and Recreation
13. Transportation and Circulation
14. Utilities
15. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

C. Report Organization

This document is organized into the following chapters:

- ◆ **Chapter 1: Introduction.** This chapter discusses the use and organization of this EIR.
- ◆ **Chapter 2: Report Summary.** This chapter summarizes the environmental consequences that would result from adoption and implementation of the proposed project, describes recommended mitigation, and indicates the level of significance of environmental impacts before and after mitigation. Chapter 2 also includes a table summarizing the impact findings of Chapter 4.

- ◆ **Chapter 3: Project Description.** This chapter describes General Plan 2030 and the ALUCP override in detail, including a listing of proposed land use designation changes.
- ◆ **Chapter 4: Environmental Evaluation.** This chapter provides an analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project and presents recommended mitigation measures, if required, to reduce their significance.
- ◆ **Chapter 5: Alternatives to the Proposed Project.** This chapter considers three alternatives to the proposed project, including the CEQA-required “No Project Alternative.”
- ◆ **Chapter 6: CEQA-Required Assessment Conclusions.** This chapter discusses growth inducement, unavoidable significant effects, significant irreversible changes as a result of the project, and cumulative impacts.

D. Environmental Review Process

The Draft EIR will be available for review by the public and interested parties, agencies, and organizations for a period of at least 45 days, as required by State law. A public hearing on the Draft EIR will be held during the review period, during which oral comments are welcome. Written comments on the Draft EIR are also encouraged. Comments should be submitted to:

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Following the close of the public review period, a Final EIR will be prepared to respond to all substantive comments regarding the Draft EIR. The Final EIR will be made available for public review prior to consideration of its certification by Butte County. The County will hold public hearings to con-

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sider the certification of the Final EIR and the adoption of the Butte County General Plan 2030, Findings of Overriding Consideration, and ALUCP override, which may be approved as drafted or modified.