

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

This chapter consists of 15 sections that evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposed General Plan 2030 and Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) override. In accordance with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, the potential environmental effects of the proposed project are analyzed for the following environmental issue areas:

- ◆ Aesthetics
- ◆ Agriculture
- ◆ Air Quality
- ◆ Biological Resources
- ◆ Cultural Resources
- ◆ Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- ◆ Hazards and Safety
- ◆ Hydrology and Water Quality
- ◆ Land Use
- ◆ Noise
- ◆ Population and Housing
- ◆ Public Services and Recreation
- ◆ Transportation and Circulation
- ◆ Utilities
- ◆ Greenhouse Gas Emissions

A. *Format of the Environmental Evaluation*

Each section in Chapter 4 generally follows the same format and consists of the following subsections:

- ◆ The *Regulatory Framework* subsection contains an overview of the federal, State and local laws and regulations applicable to each environmental review topic.
- ◆ The *Existing Conditions* subsection describes current conditions with regard to the environmental factor reviewed.
- ◆ The *Standards of Significance* subsection tells how an impact is judged to be significant in this EIR. These standards are based on the CEQA

Guidelines and other regulatory criteria where noted. In some cases, the County has modified the standards to be germane to a General Plan EIR.

- ◆ The *Impact Discussion* gives an overview of potential impacts of the proposed project and tells why impacts were found to be significant or less than significant. This section also includes a discussion of cumulative impacts of the proposed project.
- ◆ The *Maximum Theoretical Buildout* subsection provides a brief discussion about potential impacts of the proposed project based on maximum theoretical buildout. This section is provided for information purposes only, and this EIR does not make findings based on maximum theoretical buildout.
- ◆ The *Impacts and Mitigation Measures* subsection lists identified impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed General Plan 2030 and suggested measures that would mitigate each impact, where such measures are available.

In Sections 4.1 through 4.15, each numbered impact is considered significant prior to mitigation. Mitigation measures have been suggested that would reduce significant impacts to the maximum extent feasible. Following an identified mitigation measure, there is a statement whether the mitigation would reduce the impact to less than significant, or whether it would remain significant and unavoidable.

B. Cumulative Impact Analysis

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines requires an EIR to discuss cumulative impacts of a project when the project's incremental effect is cumulatively considerable. A cumulative impact consists of an impact created as a result of the combination of the project evaluated in the EIR together with other reasonably foreseeable projects causing related impacts.

In the case of an area-wide planning document such as a General Plan, the “project evaluated in the EIR” is development within the unincorporated county. “Cumulative impacts” occur from development under General Plan 2030 within the unincorporated county, combined with effects of development on lands in the incorporated portions of Butte County and adjacent counties.

This EIR will provide the cumulative context for future, individual projects. After this EIR is certified, future projects processed with a Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration pursuant to CEQA will rely on this EIR for the cumulative analysis.

The cumulative impacts analyses are included in the Impact Discussions in Sections 4.1 to 4.15.

1. Geographic Area for Cumulative Analysis

Cumulative impacts may occur over different geographic areas for different types of analyses. The cumulative discussions in Sections 4.1 through 4.15 explain the geographic scope of the area affected by each cumulative effect (e.g. watershed or air basin). The geographic area considered for each cumulative impact depends upon the impact that is being analyzed. For example, in assessing air quality impacts, all development within the air basin contributes to regional emissions of criteria pollutants, and basin-wide projections of emissions are the best tool for determining the cumulative effect. For most resource issues, the cumulative context evaluated in this EIR is Butte County and its neighboring counties.

2. Cumulative Projects Considered

In each of the following 15 sections, the cumulative impacts of General Plan 2030 and the ALUCP override take into account growth and development projected by General Plan 2030 for unincorporated Butte County, in combination with impacts from projected growth within the incorporated municipalities in Butte County and adjacent counties. Therefore, the geographic scope covered by the cumulative analysis is a larger area than the geographic

scope of the proposed project, which is unincorporated Butte County. As described in Chapter 6, the projected growth in other jurisdictions was estimated based on planning documents and conversations with the applicable city or county's planning staff. In each section of Chapter 4, the cumulative impacts discussion is based on the cumulative development described in Chapter 6.