

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

The evaluation of projects to determine their effects on the environment is required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). When a project could have a significant effect on the environment, the agency with primary responsibility over the approval of the project (the lead agency) is required to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). As stated in the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15121¹:

An EIR is an informational document which will inform public agency decision makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effects of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project. The public agency shall consider the information in the EIR along with other information which may be presented to the agency (when considering whether to approve a project).

An EIR is the public document used to meet these requirements. The EIR must also disclose: significant adverse environmental impacts that cannot be avoided; growth inducing impacts; effects not found to be significant; and the significant cumulative impacts of all past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. From this point forward, an “impact” or “significant impact” is assumed to be an adverse effect on the environment.

This EIR was prepared in accordance with the requirements, as amended, of the CEQA of 1970 (PRC Section 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations Section 15000 et seq.). This EIR evaluates the environmental impacts that could result from implementation of the Draft City of Folsom 2035 General Plan (2035 General Plan). The State CEQA Guidelines charge public agencies with the responsibility of avoiding or minimizing environmental damage that could result from implementation of a project, where feasible.

The purpose of an EIR is neither to recommend approval nor denial of a project. An EIR is an informational document used in the planning and decision-making process by the lead agency and responsible and trustee agencies. An EIR describes the significant environmental impacts of a project, potentially feasible measures to mitigate significant impacts, and potentially feasible alternatives to the project that can reduce or avoid significant environmental effects. CEQA requires decision-makers to balance the benefits of a project against its unavoidable environmental effects in deciding whether to carry out a project. As part of this responsibility, public agencies are required to balance various public objectives, including economic, environmental, and social issues.

This Draft Programmatic EIR (Draft PEIR)² is intended to provide information to the public and to decision makers regarding the potential environmental effects of adoption and implementation of 2035 General Plan, which consists of a comprehensive update of Folsom’s current General Plan. The 2035 General Plan consists of a policy document, including Land Use and Circulation

¹ Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Chapter 3 Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act.

² For a definition of a Program EIR, see Section 1.2 of this chapter.

Diagrams. For purposes of this Draft PEIR, the project under review consists of the 2035 General Plan policy document and diagrams.

Prior to considering adoption of the 2035 General Plan, the City of Folsom (City), the lead agency for the project, must certify that the Draft PEIR is adequate under CEQA, and that City decision makers have considered the information therein. If significant environmental effects are identified, the lead agency must adopt “Findings” indicating whether feasible mitigation measures or alternatives exist that can avoid or reduce those effects. If the significant environmental impacts are identified as significant and unavoidable, the City may still approve the project if it determines that social, economic, legal, technological, or other factors override the unavoidable impacts. The City would then be required to prepare a “Statement of Overriding Considerations” that discusses the specific reasons for approving the project, based on information in the EIR and other information in the record. Upon making these findings, the City may then consider adoption of the 2035 General Plan as further described in Chapter 3, *Project Description*.

1.2 TYPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

This Draft PEIR is being prepared as a “Program” EIR pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(a)(3) that states:

A Program EIR is an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related ... [i]n connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program.

Therefore, a Program EIR is an EIR which may be prepared on a large-scale planning document such as the 2035 General Plan, that provides the framework for specific projects to be developed in accordance with identified land use patterns. Program EIRs are not project-specific and do not evaluate the potential impacts of specific development projects that may be allowed in the 2035 General Plan.

Although the legally required contents of a program EIR are the same as those of a project EIR, in practice, there are differences in level of detail. General plans by their nature are broad, long-range, and conceptual. Program EIRs are typically conceptual and abstract. They contain a more general discussion of impacts, alternatives, and mitigation measures than do project-level EIRs. A Program EIR is appropriate for the 2035 General Plan because the 2035 General Plan is meant to guide long-term development within the City of Folsom’s General Plan planning area (the “project site,” as defined by CEQA)³. The 2035 General Plan does not dictate specific site-planning requirements, internal transportation networks, or other project-level details. The City acknowledges and intends to make best use of the advantages to the programmatic approach to environmental analysis and reporting in this EIR. As noted in CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(b):

³ For more information regarding the 2035 General Plan planning area, and the area assessed in this Draft PEIR, see Chapter 3, *Project Description*, and Chapter 5, *Introduction to the Environmental Analysis*.

“Use of a program EIR can provide the following advantages. The program EIR can:

- 1) Provide an occasion for a more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives than would be practical in an EIR on an individual action;
- 2) Ensure consideration of cumulative impacts that might be slighted in a case-by-case analysis;
- 3) Avoid duplicative reconsideration of basic policy considerations;
- 4) Allow the Lead Agency to consider broad policy alternatives and program wide mitigation measures at an early time when the agency has greater flexibility to deal with basic problems or cumulative impacts; and
- 5) Allow reduction in paperwork.

This Draft PEIR will function as a first-tier environmental document that assesses the broad environmental impacts of future projects, with the understanding that subsequent environmental reviews will occur on a project-specific basis. As a first-tier document, this Draft PEIR is intended to streamline the review of projects consistent with the approved 2035 General Plan, and to allow the scope of the environmental analysis for future projects to be narrowed pursuant to the rules for tiering set forth in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15152.

“Tiering” refers to the relationship between a program-level EIR (where long-range programmatic cumulative impacts are the focus of the environmental analysis) and subsequent environmental analyses that focus primarily on issues unique to a smaller project within the larger program or plan. Through tiering, a subsequent environmental analysis for an individual project can incorporate, by reference, discussion that summarizes general environmental data found in the program EIR that establishes cumulative impacts and mitigation measures, the planning context, and/or the regulatory background. These broad-based issues need not be reevaluated subsequently, having been previously identified and evaluated at the program stage.

Tiering focuses the environmental review on the project-specific significant effects that were not examined in the prior environmental review, or those that are susceptible to substantial reduction or avoidance by specific revisions in the project, by the imposition of conditions, or by other means. These subsequent environmental documents will incorporate the Program EIR by reference, pursuant to Sections 15150 and 15152 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

The Public Resources Code (PRC) additionally provides streamlining coverage to the City of Folsom and other public agencies that have authority to implement EIR mitigation measures. Public agencies can use uniformly applied policies or standards to mitigate effects of future projects, avoiding the need to analyze these effects, unless substantial new information arises that changes the impact analysis (PRC Section 21083.3 (d)). For this reason, this Draft PEIR includes references to the 2035 General Plan policies and implementing actions, where appropriate, to address environmental impacts. Future CEQA documents can reference the same policies and implementing actions, where appropriate, to demonstrate less-than-significant impacts.

1.3 GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE OF THE EIR

The planning area includes all areas within the City’s current jurisdictional limits plus areas outside the city limits as described in greater detail in Chapter 3, “*Project Description*.” The Draft 2035 General Plan addresses future development and conservation as well as reinvestment within the planning area. The planning area includes two locations outside of the existing city limits. No land uses are identified by the 2035 General Plan for these two areas; nor are any goals, policies, or implementation programs aside from several related to the relocation of the City’s Corporation Yard set forth for these areas. For additional information regarding the geographic area assessed for impacts in this Draft PEIR, please refer to Chapter 5, *Introduction to the Environmental Analysis*.

This EIR analyzes impacts of the 2035 General Plan relative to current conditions, including possible land use changes from existing conditions. The geographic scope of analysis varies based on the topic being analyzed. For example, while geologic and soils impacts are generally localized, air pollutant emissions can have regional or even global impacts. Please refer to the topic-specific chapters of this EIR for a detailed description of the geographic scope of each analysis.

1.4 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

The State CEQA Guidelines have specific requirements for EIRs related to descriptions of the project, the environmental setting, and certain types of impacts. Table 1-1 identifies the required elements of an EIR (with State CEQA Guidelines sections referenced) and the corresponding chapters in which each element is discussed in this Draft PEIR.

Table 1-1 Analyses Required by the State CEQA Guidelines	
Required Description and Analysis	EIR Chapter or Section
Summary (Section 15123)	2
Description of the Project (Section 15124)	3
Description of the Existing Setting (Section 15125)	3, 4, 6-19
Environmental Impacts (Sections 15126, 15126.2, and 15143)	4, 6-19
Mitigation Measures to Minimize Significant Impacts (Sections 15126[e] and 15126.4)	6-19
Alternatives to the Proposed Project (Section 15126.6)	20
Cumulative Impacts (Section 15130)	21
Growth-Inducing Effects (Section 15126[d])	21
Significant and Irreversible Environmental Effects (Section 15126.2[c])	21
Significant Environmental Effects Which Cannot be Avoided (Section 15126.2[b])	21

Source: Planning Partners 2018.

1.5 PUBLIC REVIEW AND CEQA PROCESS

CEQA provides three opportunities for public participation during the environmental review process. These points are: (1) during the Notice of Preparation (NOP), when the public is informed that an EIR is to be prepared, and is requested to comment on the scope and contents of the proposed EIR; (2) upon circulation of the Draft EIR, when the public and agencies can comment on the adequacy of the environmental document; and (3) finally, after circulation of the Final EIR,

when the public and agencies can evaluate the lead agency's responses to comments submitted on the Draft EIR.

In accordance with Section 15082(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the City prepared and circulated a NOP of a Draft PEIR for the proposed project. The Notice of Preparation for the 2035 General Plan Draft PEIR was published on August 18, 2017 (State Clearinghouse No. 2017082054). The NOP and Project Description were circulated to the public, local and state agencies, and other interested parties to solicit comments on the 2035 General Plan. On September 13, 2017 the City held a scoping meeting for the Draft PEIR consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(c), and closed the period for public comment on the NOP on September 18, 2017.

The City received comment letters on the NOP from the following agencies and members of the public:

State Agencies

- California, Natural Resources Agency, Department of Parks and Recreation
- California, State Transportation Agency, Department of Transportation, District 3 – Sacramento Area Office
- California, Water Boards, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

Local and Regional Agencies

- County of Placer, Planning Division
- County of Sacramento, Office of Planning and Environmental Review
- Sacramento Area Council of Governments

Utilities

- Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD)
- Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District (Regional San)

Non-Governmental Organizations and Public

- Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS), Habitat 2020, and California Heartland Project
- Friends of Lakes Folsom & Natoma (FOLFAN)
- Heritage Preservation League
- Leary, Barbara
- Save the American River Association (SARA)

Environmental issues and alternatives raised by comments received on the NOP during the 30-day public review period for the NOP were considered for inclusion in the Draft PEIR (see Appendices A and B). Public and agency comments received on the NOP were reviewed, and environmental issues identified in the comment letters were individually referenced in Appendix B to indicate the specific section in the Draft PEIR where these issues are addressed. Pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines, the focus of this Draft PEIR includes the specific issues identified in the NOP, as well as concerns identified in the responses to the NOP. See Section 1.6 of this chapter for a list of environmental topics assessed in this Draft PEIR.

This Draft PEIR will be published and circulated for public comment for a period of at least 45 days. A public hearing on the Draft PEIR will be held during the review period, during which oral comments are welcome. Written and emailed comments from the public and interested and responsible agencies may be submitted at any time during the comment period. Written and emailed comments should be submitted to:

<p>Scott Johnson City of Folsom Department of Community Development 50 Natoma Street, Folsom, CA 95630 (916) 461-6206 sjohnson@folsom.ca.us</p>

For emailed comments, please include the phrase, “2035 General Plan PEIR Comment” in the subject line.

The 2035 General Plan Draft PEIR, along with copies of documents referenced herein, is available for download from the 2035 General Plan website at:

<http://folsom2035.com/documents/>

Printed copies of the Draft PEIR and its supporting documents may be obtained or viewed during standard business hours (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, at the City of Folsom Department of Planning and Community Development, 50 Natoma Street, Folsom, California 95630.

After the close of the comment period, the City will respond in writing to all comments submitted during the comment period. The Draft PEIR, the comments and responses, including any revisions of the Draft PEIR contained therein, together with a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) as described below, will constitute the Final PEIR that the City will evaluate for certification, based on review and consideration of the Final PEIR and other evidence presented in the public record. City staff will make recommendations to the Planning Commission, who will in turn make recommendations to the City Council regarding the adequacy of the Final PEIR and the merits of the proposed 2035 General Plan. The City Council will review the Final PEIR for adequacy and consider it for certification, pursuant to the requirements of Section 15090 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

Prior to certification of the Final PEIR, the City will prepare written findings of fact for each significant environmental impact identified in the Final PEIR, which in turn must be supported by substantial evidence in the administrative record. For each significant impact, the City must:

- Determine that changes in the project have been made to substantially reduce the magnitude of the impact;
- Determine that the changes to the project are within another agency’s jurisdiction, and have been or should be adopted; or,
- Find that specific economic, social, legal, technical, or other considerations make mitigation measures or alternatives infeasible (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)).

After considering the Final PEIR in conjunction with making findings, if the project would result in significant environmental impacts after imposition of feasible mitigation measures, the City may approve the project if the benefits of the project outweigh the unavoidable environmental effects. Under these circumstances, a Statement of Overriding Considerations would be prepared explaining why the City is willing to accept each significant effect (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15093).

CEQA requires that when a public agency makes findings based on a PEIR, the public agency must adopt a MMRP based on those measures that the agency has adopted or made a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment (PRC Section 21081.6). The reporting or monitoring plan must be designed to ensure compliance with the adopted measures during project implementation (PRC Section 21081.6). The MMRP for this project will be prepared and circulated under separate cover for consideration by the City in conjunction with certification of the Final PEIR.

1.6 DRAFT PEIR ORGANIZATION

This Draft PEIR is organized into the several chapters, each dealing with a separate aspect of the required content of a Draft PEIR as described in the State CEQA Guidelines. To help the reader locate information of particular interest, a brief summary of the contents of each section of the Draft PEIR is provided. The following sections are contained within the Draft PEIR:

Chapter 1: Introduction provides an overview of the purpose and scope of this Draft PEIR, the environmental review process for the Draft PEIR, and the general format of the document.

Chapter 2: Executive Summary contains a summary of environmental impacts, proposed mitigation, level of significance after mitigation, and unavoidable impacts. Also contained within this section is a summary description of project alternatives, potential cumulative impacts, and any areas of controversy known to the lead agency.

Chapter 3: Project Description provides a detailed description of the proposed project and project objectives.

Chapter 4: Land Use, Population, and Housing provides an evaluation of the 2035 General Plan with the plans and policies of regional agencies, as well as adjacent cities and counties, and federal and state land management agencies. The chapter also evaluates the effects of implementing the 2035 General Plan on established communities and the displacement of people or housing resources.

Chapter 5: Introduction to the Environmental Analysis describes the framework of analysis contained in Chapters 6 through 19.

Chapters 6 through 19: These chapters describe and evaluate each environmental issue area, including the existing environmental setting and background, applicable environmental thresholds, environmental impacts associated with adoption and implementation of the project, 2035 General Plan policy considerations related to the particular environmental issue area under analysis, and mitigation measures (including new or revised 2035 General Plan policies) to reduce environmental impacts. The environmental issue areas include:

Chapter 6, Aesthetics and Visual Resources

Chapter 7, Agricultural and Forestry Resources

- Chapter 8, Air Resources
- Chapter 9, Biological Resources
- Chapter 10, Cultural Resources
- Chapter 11, Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- Chapter 12, Global Climate Change
- Chapter 13, Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Chapter 14, Hydrology and Water Quality
- Chapter 15, Noise and Vibration
- Chapter 16, Public Services and Recreation
- Chapter 17, Transportation and Circulation
- Chapter 18, Tribal Cultural Resources
- Chapter 19, Utilities and Service Systems

Chapter 20: Alternatives Analysis analyzes alternatives to the proposed project, including the No Project Alternative and any feasible project alternatives necessary to reduce or avoid identified significant project impacts.

Chapter 21: Required CEQA Analyses provides an analysis of the project’s potential growth-inducing and cumulative impacts, significant and unavoidable impacts, environmental effects of the project found not to be significant, and irreversible changes to the natural environment resulting from the project.

Chapter 22: List of Preparers identifies all individuals responsible for the preparation of this report, including names of the Draft PEIR authors and consultants.

Chapter 23: References compiles a list of all documents used and persons, organizations, or agencies consulted in the preparation of this Draft PEIR.

Chapter 24: Frequently Used Acronyms and Abbreviations provides a list of all the acronyms and abbreviations used in this Draft PEIR.

Appendices set forth data supporting the analysis or contents of this Draft PEIR, and include the following:

- Appendix A Notice of Preparation (August 2017)
- Appendix B Comments on the Notice of Preparation
- Appendix C Regulatory Setting
- Appendix D Air Quality
- Appendix E Folsom Holding Capacity Methodology
- Appendix F Biological Resources
- Appendix G Cultural Resources
- Appendix H Global Climate Change