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INTRODUCTION

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The Wildhorse Ranch Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA) as amended. The City of Davis is the lead agency for the environmental review of the Wildhorse Ranch project evaluated herein and has the principal responsibility for approving the project. As required by Section 15121 of the CEQA Guidelines, this EIR will (a) inform public agency decision-makers, and the public generally, of the significant environmental effects of the project, (b) identify possible ways to minimize the significant adverse environmental effects, and (c) describe reasonable and feasible project alternatives which reduce environmental effects. The public agency shall consider the information in the Draft EIR along with other information that may be presented to the agency.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 1994, the City of Davis approved the Wildhorse Golf Club and Residential Development project, which designated the proposed project site as a horse ranch. The Wildhorse Golf Club and Residential Development site was formerly used for agricultural purposes, which included the use of row crops and pastures. The initial concept of the Wildhorse Golf Club and Residential Development consisted of residential neighborhoods, including, single-family homes, apartments, affordable housing, parks, and a semi-public championship golf course and clubhouse.

The Wildhorse Golf Club and Residential Development project included a General Plan Amendment to change the land use configuration for approximately 424 acres. Although the General Plan Amendment allowed single-family residences, greenbelts, and parks/recreation land uses to mix throughout the development, the land use map designated an area, located in the southeast portion of the project site, as Agriculture. The area designated as Agriculture is approximately 25.79 acres, and allows for agricultural uses, including a horse ranch; this site is the subject of the environmental analysis contained in this Draft EIR.

PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed Wildhorse Ranch project site is located on the north side of East Covell Boulevard, within the City of Davis. The site currently consists of a horse ranch located in the southeast corner of the existing Wildhorse Subdivision. The property to the east of the project site is the Davis greenbelt and habitat area that also serves as an agricultural buffer to lands east of the project site. The areas to the north and west are established residential portions of the Wildhorse subdivision. To the south is an established residential development known as Davis Manor, while to the southeast is an established residential development known as Mace Ranch. In the

current General Plan (2001), the project site is designated Agriculture which includes permitted uses such as horse boarding, breeding, and farming.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Wildhorse Ranch Project consists of 25.79 acres and includes an amendment of the General Plan land use designation of the site from Agriculture to five uses; Residential High Density, Residential Medium Density, Neighborhood Greenbelt, Natural Habitat Area, and Urban Agricultural Transition Area. The project also includes a Rezone from P-D #3-89 to a new Planned Development. The General Plan land use designation amendment request is also subject to Measure J voter approval. The proposed project includes the development of up to 191 residential units. Although the project design may continue to undergo refinement as additional consideration is given to both City staff and community input, the Draft EIR only evaluates the conservative 191 residential unit configuration. The proposed project also includes public open space, greenbelts, bike paths, and additional land to expand the greenbelt/agricultural buffer between actively farmed land and residential development. According to the Conceptual Site Plan, the residential parcels have up to the following number and type of proposed units:

Detached Single Family, 73 units

Attached single-family townhome, 78 units (36 are Middle Income for sale-attached units)

Low/Very Low Income, 40 multi-family rental units

Total: 191 units

PURPOSE OF THE EIR

As provided in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15021, public agencies are charged with the duty to avoid or minimize environmental damage where feasible. The public agency has an obligation to balance a variety of public objectives, including economic, environmental, and social issues.

CEQA requires the preparation of an EIR prior to approving any project that may have a significant effect on the environment. For the purposes of CEQA, the term *project* refers to the whole of an action, which has the potential for resulting in a direct physical change or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378[a]). With respect to the proposed Wildhorse Ranch project, the City has determined that the proposed development is a *project* within the definition of CEQA, which has the potential for resulting in significant environmental effects.

The EIR is an informational document that appraises decision-makers and the general public of the potential significant environmental effects of a proposed project. An EIR must describe a reasonable range of feasible alternatives to the project and identify possible means to minimize the significant effects. The lead agency, which is the City of Davis for this project, is required to consider the information in the EIR along with any other available information in deciding whether to approve the application. The basic requirements for an EIR include discussions of the environmental setting, environmental impacts, mitigation measures, alternatives, growth inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts.

TYPE OF DOCUMENT

The CEQA Guidelines identify several types of EIRs, each applicable to different project circumstances. This EIR has been prepared as a *project-level EIR*, pursuant to CEQA guidelines Section 15161, which examines the environmental impacts of a specific project. The project-level EIR should focus primarily on changes in the environment, which result from the development of the project. All phases of the project, including planning, construction, and operation, should be included in the analysis.

EIR PROCESS

The EIR process begins with the decision by the lead agency to prepare an EIR, either during a preliminary review of a project or at the conclusion of an initial study. Once the decision is made to prepare an EIR, the lead agency sends a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to appropriate government agencies, and when required, to the State Clearinghouse (SCH) in the Office of Planning and Research (OPR), which will ensure that responsible State agencies reply within the required time. The SCH assigns an identification number to the project, which then becomes the identification number for all subsequent environmental documents on the project. Applicable agencies have 30 days to respond to the NOP, indicating, at a minimum, reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures they wish to have explored in the Draft EIR and whether the agency will be a responsible agency or a trustee agency for the project.

As soon as the Draft EIR is completed, a notice of completion is filed with the OPR and public notice is published to inform interested parties that a Draft EIR is available for agency and/or public review and providing information regarding location of drafts and any public meetings or hearings that are scheduled. The Draft EIR is circulated for a specified period, typically 45 days, during which time reviewers may make comments. The lead agency must evaluate and respond to comments in writing, describing the disposition of any significant environmental issues raised and explaining in detail the reasons for not accepting any specific comments concerning major environmental issues. Should comments received result in the addition of significant new information to an EIR, after public notice is given, the revised EIR or affected chapters must be recirculated for another public review period with related comments and responses.

Once the lead agency is satisfied that the EIR has adequately addressed the pertinent issues in compliance with CEQA, a Final EIR will be prepared comprised of the Draft EIR, comments, responses to comments, and any errata and/or changes. The Final EIR is made available for review by the public and commenting agencies. Before approving a project, the lead agency shall certify that the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA and has been presented to the decision-making body of the lead agency and has been reviewed and considered by that body, and that the Final EIR reflects the lead agency's independent judgment and analysis.

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) for this Draft EIR was released July 5, 2007 for a 30-day review (Appendix A). A public scoping meeting was held on July 18, 2007. Comments provided by the public and public agencies in response to the NOP were received by the City of Davis and are provided in Appendix B. In addition, an Initial Study was prepared to focus the scope of the

Wildhorse Ranch EIR. The Initial Study was included as an attachment to the NOP (See Appendix A to this Draft EIR).

The Wildhorse Ranch Draft EIR will be circulated for a 45-day public review period. Comments received during the comment period and the public hearing(s) will be addressed in a Response to Comments volume. The Davis Planning Commission and City Council, in accordance with CEQA, will review the Draft EIR and Responses to Comments prior to certification of the Final EIR.

In order to approve the project, state law requires that the Council make several types of “findings.” Findings are a recitation of the conclusions of the Council on particular issues, including documentation of the evidence in support of those conclusions. The required findings are as follows:

- Certification of the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15090) – These findings support the adequacy of the EIR for decision-making purposes.
- Significant Impacts (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091) – These findings explain how the Council chose to address each identified significant impact, including the mitigation measures adopted or an explanation of why such measures are infeasible.
- Project Approval (CEQA Guidelines Section 15092) – These findings support the Council’s action to approve the project.
- Statement of Overriding Considerations (CEQA Guidelines Section 15093) if applicable – These findings document the Council’s decision to approve the project despite the fact that unavoidable impacts will result, due to other overriding benefits of the project.

In addition, as indicated in *Section 40.41.020* (Voter Approval) of the Davis Zoning Ordinance, voter approval is required for changes to land use designations on the Land Use Map from Agricultural or Urban Reserve to Urban land use designations or from Agricultural to Urban Reserve land use designations.

In part, this section of the Zoning Ordinance states (*see Section 40.41.020 [B][2C]*):

- (c) Approval by an affirmative majority vote of the voters of the City of Davis voting on the proposal.

The land use entitlements for development on all, or any portion of either of these properties shall become effective only after approval by the City Council and the voters. The City shall not submit any application to voters if the application has not first been approved by the City Council, unless otherwise required by law.

SCOPE OF THE DRAFT EIR

State CEQA Guidelines § 15126.2(a) states, in pertinent part:

An EIR shall identify and focus on the significant environmental effects of the proposed project. In assessing the impact of a proposed project on the environment, the lead agency should normally limit its examination to changes in the existing physical conditions in the affected area as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published, or where no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced.

Pursuant to these guidelines, the scope of this Draft EIR addresses specific issues and concerns identified as potentially significant. These were determined based on the preparation of an Initial Study, review of comments received on the NOP and review of testimony received at the scoping hearing. The Initial Study prepared for the proposed project concluded that several environmental issues would result in a less-than-significant impact. The complete text of the Initial Study is contained in Appendix A as an attachment to the NOP.

Resources identified for study in this Draft EIR include:

- Land Use and Agricultural Resources;
- Population, Housing, and Employment;
- Transportation and Circulation;
- Air Quality;
- Noise;
- Biological Resources;
- Aesthetics;
- Hydrology, Water Quality, and Drainage;
- Public Services and Facilities; and
- Climate Change.

The evaluation of effects is presented on a resource-by-resource basis in Sections 4.1 through 4.10. Each section is divided into four sections: Introduction, Environmental Setting, Regulatory Context, and Impacts and Mitigation Measures.

Impacts that are determined to be significant in Chapter 4, and for which no feasible mitigation measures are available to reduce those impacts to a less-than-significant level are identified as *significant and unavoidable*. Chapter 5 in the Draft EIR presents a discussion and comprehensive list of all significant and unavoidable impacts identified in Chapter 4.

COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE NOTICE OF PREPARATION

The City of Davis received eight comment letters during the open comment period on the NOP for the Wildhorse Ranch EIR. In addition, four verbal comments were submitted during the NOP scoping meeting and recorded and subsequently transcribed by Capitol Reporters. A copy of each letter and scoping meeting transcript is provided in Appendix B of this EIR. The letters were authored by representatives of State and local agencies and residents.

State and Local Agencies and Organizations

- Bridget Binning, *California Department of Public Health*
- Wayne Eckert, *Habitat for Humanity*

Adjacent Residents and Other Interested Parties

- Kuk Chow, *City Resident*
- Jerry and Deedra Johnson, *City Residents*
- Ranjit Maan (2), *City Residents*
- Brian McAloon, *City Resident*
- Jill Westrup, *City Resident*
- Laura Westrup (2), *City Resident*
- Warren Westrup, *City Resident*
- Philip Wyels, *City Resident*

The following list, categorized by issue, summarizes the concerns in these letters:

<p><u>Land Use and Agricultural Resources</u> (Section 4.1)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of Prime Farmland to residential. • Purchasing agricultural conservation easements to offset loss of Prime Farmland. • Loss of open space and open space calculations. • Land use assumptions regarding ConAgra / Hunt Wesson site. • The amount of park space proposed for Wildhorse Ranch. • Impacts related to deeding twenty-feet to adjacent homes or creation of an open space corridor. • Land use consistency with the adjacent homes.
<p><u>Population, Housing, and Employment</u> (Section 4.2)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for additional housing.
<p><u>Transportation and Circulation:</u> (Section 4.3)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased traffic as a result of proposed project. • Accommodation for bicycles and transit. • Traffic impacts to Pole Line Road. • Traffic Impacts to East Covell Boulevard. • Traffic impacts Citywide. • Traffic impacts to additional pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles near and around the new Junior High School. • Increase ridership of transit services. • Emergency Access compatibility with surrounding homes. • Adequate parking for additional vehicles.

<p><u>Air Quality</u> (Section 4.4)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact analysis of odors, dust, and other impacts in relation to baseline assumption including the Wildhorse Management Plan. • Impacts from aerial pesticide applications. • Impacts from increased traffic.
<p><u>Noise</u> (Section 4.5)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased noise levels from Wildhorse Ranch traffic. • Noise impacts to and from residential uses.
<p><u>Biological Resources</u> (Section 4.6)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts to Swainson’s hawk foraging habitat. • Impacts to Burrowing owl habitat within the project and adjacent agricultural buffer. • Impacts to giant garter snake habitat. • State and federally listed or other special-status species on or near the Wildhorse Ranch site.
<p><u>Aesthetics</u> (Section 4.7)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting scenic vistas and view corridors. • Aesthetic impacts to adjacent homes to the North and West.
<p><u>Hydrology, Water Quality, and Drainage</u> (Section 4.8)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stormwater runoff during 10-year and 100-year events. • On-site drainage, detention, and storage capacity for storm water runoff. • Capacity of Covell Drain to receive increased runoff.
<p><u>Public Services and Facilities:</u> (Section 4.9)</p>	<p>Consideration of the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of project on infrastructure and City/County services. • Need for park facilities within the proposed greenbelt. • Increased crime rate. • Impacts related to the increased use of schools. • Electrical power and power infrastructure. • Impacts to wastewater treatment plant associated with additional development.
<p><u>Climate Change</u> (Section 4.10)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts from greenhouse gas generation.
<p><u>Alternatives Analysis</u> (Chapter 5)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of alternatives with less density and more open space.
<p><u>Statutorily Required Sections</u> (Chapter 6)</p>	<p>Concerns related to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth-inducing impacts to adjacent properties.
<p><u>Cultural Resources</u> (Initial Study)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential occurrence of unknown cultural resources onsite.

<u>Geology</u> (Initial Study)	Concerns related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plasticity of soils.
<u>Topics Outside of CEQA</u> (not discussed further in Draft EIR)	Concerns related to the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of fiscal impacts of the project.

All of these issues, with the exception of “Topics Outside of CEQA,” are addressed in this Draft EIR, in the relevant sections identified in the first column.

ORGANIZATION OF THE DRAFT EIR

The Wildhorse Ranch Draft EIR is organized into the following sections:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Provides an introduction and overview describing the intended use of the Draft EIR and the review and certification process, as well as summaries of the chapters included in the Draft EIR and summaries of the environmental resources that would be impacted by the project.

Chapter 2 – Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Summarizes the elements of the project and the environmental impacts that would result from implementation of the proposed project, describes proposed mitigation measures and indicates the level of significance of impacts after mitigation. Acknowledges alternatives that would reduce or avoid significant impacts.

Chapter 3 – Project Description

Provides a detailed description of the proposed project, including the location, background information, major objectives, and technical characteristics.

Chapter 4 – Environmental Setting, Impacts and Mitigation

Contains a project-level and cumulative analysis of environmental issue areas associated with the proposed project. The section for each environmental issue contains an introduction and description of the setting of the project site, identifies impacts and recommends appropriate mitigation measures.

Chapter 5 – Alternatives Analysis

Describes the alternatives to the proposed project, their respective environmental effects, and a determination of the environmentally superior alternative.

Chapter 6 – Statutorily Required Sections

Provides discussions required by CEQA regarding impacts that would result from the proposed project, including a summary of cumulative impacts, potential growth-inducing impacts, significant and unavoidable impacts, and significant irreversible changes to the environment.

Chapter 7 – Draft EIR Authors / Persons Consulted

Lists report authors and persons consulted who provided technical assistance in the preparation and review of the Draft EIR.

Chapter 8 – References

Provides bibliographic information for all references and resources cited.

Appendices

Includes the NOP, which includes the Initial Study, responses to the NOP, and additional technical information.