

Section 4.0: Environmental Impact Analysis

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section analyzes the potential environmental impacts associated with approval and implementation of the proposed *Guasti Plaza Specific Plan Amendment*. While revision of a policy document, such as the Specific Plan, would not lead to any immediate or direct changes to the environment, the proposed Specific Plan Amendment would allow residential development on the 11.72-acre project site under a proposed Residential Overlay Zone that would lead to future commercial or residential development on the site. As such, implementation of the amended Specific Plan could indirectly lead to the construction and operation of urban residential or commercial land uses on the site, which would be accompanied by environmental changes. While commercial development has been planned and approved under the Guasti Plaza Specific Plan and the impacts of commercial development on the site have been analyzed in the EIR for the Specific Plan and the EIR for the Redevelopment Plan that includes the Specific Plan area, the environmental impacts of future residential uses have not been analyzed in these previous EIRs. Thus, the analysis on this section focuses on the impacts of future residential development that would be allowed under the proposed *Guasti Plaza Specific Plan Amendment*. (References to the project site also refer to the area on the southwestern section of the Specific Plan area where 100 units may be developed under the alternative scenario.)

The environmental issues on which potentially significant adverse impacts may occur are analyzed in this section. Based on the preliminary analysis in the Initial Study, the environmental analysis in this SEIR addresses the Specific Plan Amendment's potential impacts on the following issues:

- Land Use and Planning
- Population and Housing
- Transportation and Circulation
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Geology and Soils
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Public Services and Recreation
- Utilities
- Human Health and Hazards
- Visual Quality and Aesthetics
- Climate Change

The purpose of this section is to describe the existing conditions on the project site and in the surrounding area and to identify the potential changes to existing conditions or environmental impacts that may result from implementation of the Specific Plan Amendment. Project impacts are then compared to the impacts identified in the previous EIRs for the Guasti Plaza Specific Plan and for the Guasti Redevelopment Plan. Relevant mitigation measures in the previous EIRs are identified and standard conditions and mitigation measures are provided for any identified significant adverse impacts.

In order to facilitate the analysis of each issue, a standard format was developed to analyze each environmental issue thoroughly. This format is presented below, with a brief discussion of the information included within each topic.

- ◆ **Environmental Setting** - This section describes the existing physical and regulatory conditions related to each issue area. In accordance with Section 15125, *Environmental Setting*, of the State CEQA Guidelines, both the local and regional settings are discussed, as they exist prior to implementation of the proposed Specific Plan Amendment and during the time between the NOP publication (November 2008) and the release of the Draft Supplemental EIR for public review.

Section 4.0: Environmental Impact Analysis

- ◆ **Threshold of Significance** - The threshold of significance identifies criteria used in determining whether an impact is considered significant and is derived from the environmental concerns outlined in the Environmental Checklist provided as Appendix G to the CEQA Guidelines. In addition, City policies, as well as standards and thresholds adopted by other public agencies with jurisdiction over select environmental issues, are used as thresholds of significance. Accepted technical and scientific data are used in other instances to determine if an impact would be considered significant.
- ◆ **Environmental Impacts** - This section of the SEIR identifies and describes the short-term and long-term environmental impacts, direct and indirect impacts, both adverse and beneficial, which would result from adoption and implementation of the amended Specific Plan. Since the impacts of office and commercial development have been analyzed in the previous EIR for the Guasti Plaza Specific Plan, the analysis focuses on the potential impacts of residential development that may occur on the site. Where impacts are the same, discussion includes the impacts of both commercial and residential uses.

All project-related impacts are analyzed in accordance with Section 15126, *Consideration and Discussion of Environmental Impacts*, of the State CEQA Guidelines. Impacts are compared to the threshold of significance to determine if they exceed the threshold and thus, are considered significant and adverse. Impacts, which are considered significant and adverse, are identified as such and analyzed accordingly. Cumulative impacts are discussed separately in Section 6.0, and growth-inducing impacts are discussed in Section 7.0 of this SEIR.

- ◆ **Previous Analysis** – Potential environmental impacts are also compared to the impacts identified in the previous EIRs to determine if the impacts are the same and to identify the applicable mitigation measures that have been previously developed for these impacts. As a Supplemental EIR, a discussion of the environmental impacts analyzed in the EIR for the Guasti Plaza Specific Plan is provided, along with those in the EIR for the Guasti Redevelopment Plan, as they relate to the proposed Amendment and the potential future development of residential uses on the project site. This provides a comparison of the impacts of the proposed Amendment with those anticipated at the site and analyzed in the previous EIRs and to identify mitigation measures in the previous EIRs that would be applicable to the proposed Amendment and future residential development allowed under the Amendment. It should be noted that the baseline conditions in this discussion are derived from the EIR for the Guasti Plaza Specific Plan (1996) and the EIR for the Guasti Redevelopment Plan (2001). Thus, they reflect existing conditions in 1996 and 2001 when the previous EIRs were under preparation.
- ◆ **Standard Conditions and Mitigation Measures** - Existing regulations that are applicable to future development that would be allowed under the proposed Specific Plan Amendment are identified in this section. In addition, where a potentially significant and adverse environmental effect has been identified in the environmental analysis, mitigation measures have been included in this section of the document. These measures are designed to “... *minimize significant adverse impacts ... for each significant environmental effect identified in the EIR*”, as stated in Section 15126 of the State CEQA Guidelines. Mitigation measures in the previous EIRs that are applicable to future residential development that would be allowed under an alternative development scenario in the amended Specific Plan are also listed.

Section 4.0: Environmental Impact Analysis

- ◆ **Unavoidable Significant Adverse Impacts** - Unavoidable significant adverse impacts are project impacts which, either, cannot be mitigated or remain significant even after mitigation. The level of significance of any potentially significant adverse impact, after the implementation of the standard conditions and recommended mitigation measures, is identified in this section the SEIR. Any unavoidable significant adverse impacts are called out.