
6.0 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

6.0 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

This section discusses the additional topics statutorily required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The topics discussed include significant and unavoidable environmental impacts, growth-inducing impacts, and significant irreversible environmental changes/irretrievable commitment of resources.

6.1 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluate the growth-inducing impacts of a proposed action. A growth-inducing impact is defined by CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) as follows:

...the way in which a proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Included in this are projects which would remove obstacles to population growth...Increases in the population may tax existing community service facilities, requiring construction of new facilities that could cause significant environmental effects. Also...the characteristic of some projects which may encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively.

A project can have direct and/or indirect growth inducement potential. Direct growth inducement would result if a project, for example, involved construction of new housing. A project would have indirect growth inducement potential if it established substantial new permanent employment opportunities (e.g., commercial, industrial, or governmental enterprises) or if it would involve a construction effort with substantial short-term employment opportunities that would indirectly stimulate the need for additional housing and services to support the new employment demand. Similarly, a project would indirectly induce growth if it would remove an obstacle to additional growth and development, such as removing a constraint on a required public service. For example, a project providing an increased water supply in an area where water service historically limited growth could be considered growth inducing.

The CEQA Guidelines further explain that the environmental effects of induced growth are considered indirect impacts of the proposed action. These indirect impacts or secondary effects of growth may result in significant, adverse environmental impacts. Potential secondary effects of growth include increased demand on other community and public services and infrastructure, increased traffic and noise, and adverse environmental impacts such as degradation of air and water quality, degradation or loss of plant and animal habitat, and conversion of agricultural and open space land to developed uses.

The CEQA Guidelines state that it is not assumed that growth in an area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2[d]). However, growth inducement may constitute an adverse impact if the growth is not consistent with or accommodated by the land use plans and growth management plans and policies for the area affected. Local land use plans provide for land use development patterns and growth policies that allow for the orderly expansion of urban development supported by adequate urban public services, such as water supply, roadway infrastructure, sewer service, and solid waste service. A project that would induce "disorderly" growth (growth that conflicts with local land use plans) could indirectly cause additional adverse environmental impacts and other public services impacts. Thus, to assess whether a growth-inducing project would result in

6.0 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

adverse secondary effects, it is important to assess the degree to which the growth accommodated by a project would or would not be consistent with applicable land use plans.

COMPONENTS OF GROWTH

The timing, magnitude, and location of land development and population growth in a community or region are based upon various interrelated land use and economic variables. Key variables include regional economic trends, market demand for residential and nonresidential uses, land availability and cost, the availability and quality of transportation facilities and public services, proximity to employment centers, the supply and cost of housing, and regulatory policies or conditions.

PROJECT-SPECIFIC GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

Growth Inducement Potential

As described in Chapter 2.0, Project Description, of this Draft EIR, the proposed project would provide housing for a maximum of 415 residents in 345 attached and detached housing units on the project site, on which currently only one single-family residence is located. Therefore, the proposed project would directly induce growth both on the project site and in Nevada County as a whole.

Although the project would ultimately result in a higher residential density and general intensity of use on the project site than was anticipated in the Nevada County General Plan (see Impact 3.12.1, in Section 3.12, Population, Housing, and Employment), the proposed project will also provide many services for the benefit of the residents of the community such as indoor/outdoor recreational opportunities, shopping, medical, and similar services for project residents on-site. Thus, growth on the project site would largely be confined to the project area and would avoid induced growth in the larger Nevada County region.

Implementation of the proposed project would also result in an amendment to the County's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance as discussed in Section 2.0, Project Description. These amendments could also induce growth similar to the proposed project in other areas of the county. Because the text amendments would restrict continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs) to those areas in the county designated as Planned Development (PD) or Special Development Area (SDA), there are limited parcels available in the county for this type of development. Furthermore, though the proposed amendments would create new allowed uses, they would not result in any specific physical improvements in the county, nor would they grant entitlements for additional development on any one site. Therefore, it is not expected that the amendment to the County's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance would result in substantial growth inducement elsewhere in the county.

Development of the project site would also result in the improvement and extension of infrastructure facilities located in and/or adjoining the project site. Under typical project conditions, any time utility lines or other infrastructure is expanded, growth inducement occurs, as these improvements allow not only for the development responsible for expanding the infrastructure but also for any other projects proposed in the surrounding area as a result of the availability of new infrastructure. However, in the case of the proposed project, the surrounding area is already developed with rural residential uses that are currently serviced by existing infrastructure. As such, the project would not be expected to induce growth as a result of new infrastructure.

Growth Effects of the Project

The proposed project would result in the project site being developed with a CCRC featuring a variety of independent and supportive living arrangements including independent living, assisted living, nursing care, physical rehabilitation, and memory impairment housing in a campus-like setting featuring commercial and recreational uses and transportation as well as a variety of other services. Each of these uses would result in people and activities occurring in an area that is currently characterized by rural residential development and agricultural (grazing) land as well as undeveloped open space and the Bear River. Growth effects would include increases in emissions of ozone-precursor pollutants and coarse particulate matter (PM₁₀), increases in cumulative greenhouse gas emissions, an increase in noise, increases in traffic, and increased demand for public services and utilities as residents, employees, and visitors to the area carry out daily activities. Examples include emissions from resident, employee, visitor, and delivery vehicles, landscaping and property maintenance activities, and the operation of stationary equipment. These secondary effects of growth associated with the proposed project are addressed in the technical sections of this Draft EIR (Sections 3.1 through 3.14), as well as in the Nevada County General Plan and its associated environmental review document.

It should also be noted that proposed development associated with the project would be limited to 48 acres total, with all development except the proposed emergency access road, trails, barbecue areas, water tank, and sewer lift station to be clustered within the northwest portion of the site. Approximately 4 acres of the site would be used for agricultural uses (row crops and an orchard), with 163 acres remaining as undeveloped open space. As discussed above, the proposed project would be developed as a self-contained community that would largely be confined to the project area and would thus avoid the growth effects of sprawl development patterns.

All future development projects located elsewhere in the county and consistent with the proposed amendments to the County's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance would be subject to applicable County regulations and requirements intended to prevent the adverse effects of growth. Pursuant to the proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment (Section L.II 2.7.11(C)(4)), future CCRC projects located elsewhere in the county would also be subject to further CEQA analysis of project-specific impacts.

6.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Public Resources Code Section 21100(b)(2), a part of CEQA, requires that certain EIRs must include a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes of project implementation. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c) describes irreversible environmental changes as follows:

Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irrecoverable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

Long-term irreversible environmental changes would include a change in the land use and visual character of the site, an increase in local and regional traffic and associated air pollutant

6.0 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

emissions and noise level increases, an increase in the volumes of solid waste and wastewater generated in the area, and an increase in water consumption.

Development of the project site would irretrievably commit building materials and energy to the construction and maintenance of buildings and infrastructure proposed. Nonrenewable and limited resources that would likely be consumed as part of project site development would include, but are not limited to, oil, natural gas, gasoline, lumber, sand and gravel, asphalt, water, steel, and similar materials. In addition, the project site would result in an increased demand on public services and utilities (see Section 3.13, Public Services and Utilities).

6.3 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(b) requires an EIR to discuss unavoidable significant environmental effects, including those that can be mitigated but not reduced to a level of insignificance. In addition, Section 15093(a) of the CEQA Guidelines allows the decision-making agency to determine whether the benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental impacts of implementing the project. The County can approve a project with unavoidable adverse impacts if it prepares a Statement of Overriding Considerations setting forth the specific reasons for making such a judgment.

The following impacts of the proposed project, which have been recognized as significant and unavoidable in either the project or cumulative context, are specifically identified in Sections 3.1 through 3.14 and Section 4.0 of this Draft EIR. The reader is referred to the various environmental issue areas of these sections for further details and analysis of these significant and unavoidable impacts.

Contribution to Cumulative Regional Air Quality Conditions

Impact 3.3.8 Long-term operation of the proposed project, in combination with existing, approved, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable development in the Mountain Counties Air Basin, would contribute to cumulative increases in emissions of ozone-precursor pollutants (ROG and NO_x) and PM₁₀ that could contribute to future concentrations of ozone and PM₁₀, for which the region is currently designated nonattainment.

AB 32 Compliance and GHG Emissions

Impact 3.5.1 Implementation of the proposed project would result in a net increase in greenhouse gas emissions that would conflict with the goals of AB 32 or result in a significant impact on the environment.

Cumulative Wildland Fire Hazards

Impact 3.8.8 The proposed project, along with increased urban development in Nevada, Yuba, and Placer counties, would result in cumulative wildland fire hazard impacts.