

7.0 OTHER CEQA-REQUIRED DISCUSSIONS

This section discusses other issues for which CEQA requires analysis in addition to the specific issue areas discussed in Section 4.0, *Environmental Impact Analysis*. These additional issues include: (1) the potential to induce growth, including the removal of obstacles to growth; (2) significant unavoidable impacts, and (3) irreversible impacts on the environment.

7.1 GROWTH INDUCING EFFECTS

CEQA Guidelines §15126.2(d) requires a discussion of the ways in which a project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Included in this is the discussion of project characteristics which encourage and/or facilitate other activities that, individually or cumulatively, could have significant environmental effects. CEQA emphasizes that growth in any area should not be assumed to be necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.

Generally speaking, a project may be considered growth inducing if it results in one of the five conditions identified below:

1. Induces population growth.
2. Induces economic expansion.
3. Establishes a precedent setting action (e.g. an innovation, a radical change in zoning or general plan designation).
4. Results in development or encroachment in an isolated or adjacent area of open space (i.e. being distinct from “infill” development).
5. Removes an impediment to growth (e.g. the establishment of an essential public service or the provision of new access to an area).

The impacts identified below are based on estimated buildout under the proposed Community Plan.

7.1.1 Population Growth

The proposed Community Plan largely maintains current land use and base district zoning designations in the Plan Area. As discussed in Section 2.0, *Project Description*, development under the 20-year buildout of the proposed Community Plan is estimated to generate a total of 936 additional primary and secondary residential units in the Plan Area (including development under the Affordable Housing Overlay). Based on the County’s average household size of 2.76 persons per dwelling unit (California Department of Finance, 2007), 20-year buildout under the proposed Plan would result in 2,266 new residents by 2030. Based on historical growth data, twenty-year buildout conditions under the existing Comprehensive Plan, would total approximately 1,960 persons (County of Santa Barbara, 2007). Twenty year buildout under the proposed Plan Area would be 306 more persons than under the existing Comprehensive Plan, for a potential 2030 population increase of 15.6%. The increase in population growth under the proposed plan is primarily the result of the application of the Mixed Use Overlay zoning for the town centers of Los Olivos and Santa Ynez and the



application of the Affordable Housing Overlay Ordinance for up to four sites within the Santa Ynez township. The potential population increase of 306 people is not a significant increase in population on a County-wide basis. The current County population is less than year 2007 population estimate in the Regional Growth Forecast, such that the potential addition of 306 people in the Plan Area is not expected to result in an increase in year 2030 County population. Furthermore, the Plan directs this growth into the urban portions of the Plan Area is consistent with County and goals for reducing sprawl and maintaining Urban/Rural boundaries.

7.1.2 Economic Growth

Under 20-year buildout of the proposed Community Plan, approximately 555,334 square feet (sf) of additional commercial development is estimated. This is a 44.8% increase over the existing amount of commercial development in the Plan Area, which is 1,239,202 sf; however it represents less commercial development than would be expected under the existing Comprehensive Plan (585,533 sf under 20-year buildout conditions). The primary difference between buildout under the proposed Community Plan and buildout under existing land use and zoning designations is the application of the Mixed Use Overlay District to the commercial cores of Los Olivos and Santa Ynez. Under the proposed Mixed Use Overlay District, higher proportions of residential uses would be allowed, permitting requirements would be reduced, and parking requirements adjusted as an incentive to mixed use development projects. Hence, while a similar amount of development is projected on commercial properties within the Plan Area, a greater portion of residential mixed use would be expected under the proposed Community Plan. Development of new commercial and mixed use projects under the proposed Community Plan would result in both short-term and long-term job opportunities associated with construction-related activities and operating the commercial/industrial facilities. The additional commercial growth would provide additional job opportunities for Plan Area residents and would enhance services available to Valley residents. These would be seen as beneficial impacts. Overall, since the proposed Community Plan would not increase the amount of commercial development under 20-year buildout conditions, it would not have a significant impact on economic growth.

7.1.3 Precedent Setting Action

The proposed Community Plan largely maintains current land use and base district zoning designations in the Plan Area. The application of the Mixed Use Overlay District in Los Olivos and Santa Ynez Townships would provide additional incentives for development of mixed use projects in these commercial cores, which is consistent with County housing and land use policies elsewhere in the County. Similarly, the proposed designation of an Affordable Housing Overlay District to four sites in Santa Ynez is in keeping with County housing policies to provide a mix of residential opportunities for area residents and would not be seen as precedent setting. Overall, the proposed Community Plan provides direction on the type and intensity of new development in the Plan Area, and includes a number of policies and standards to protect environmental resources. The intent of the Community Plan is to provide a framework of policies, standards, and actions that preserve the character and uniqueness of the Plan Area and its townships. Thus, the proposed Community Plan would not set any precedents for growth.



7.1.4 Development of Open Space/Vacant Land

Development of open space is considered growth-inducing when it occurs outside urban boundaries or in isolated locations instead of infill areas. The proposed Community Plan maintains and refines the urban-rural boundary line without any large-scale expansion of urban growth limits. The Plan also directs new development to existing urban areas and provides additional scrutiny (through the application of the Heritage Sites Overlay and the expanded Design Control Overlay) of development outside of urbanized areas, in keeping with the existing pattern of development. The change in residential buildout potential in comparison to existing land use and zoning designations, as discussed in Section 7.1.1 above, is largely limited to providing additional residential opportunities in the urban townships. Development of open space and vacant lands in areas outside of the townships would largely be limited to additional development of primary residential units under current zoning standards and the development of additional residential second units and agricultural employee units on larger residentially or agriculturally zoned parcels. Overall residential densities may increase slightly on currently open space or vacant lands in the inner rural and rural areas, but the majority of the new development would occur within the urban areas of the Plan Area. The Plan does not encourage development in rural areas at accelerated rates in comparison to historical rates, and rather has policies, designations, and standards that encourage growth to occur as infill in urban areas.

7.1.5 Removal of an Impediment to Growth

The primary impediments to growth in the Plan Area are existing zoning designations and standards and substandard sewage treatment capabilities in Special Problem Areas, which include the townships of Los Olivos and Ballard as well as the Janin Areas subdivision and an agriculturally zoned area east of the Santa Ynez township. Septic system constraints also exist in the west side of Santa Ynez, including the Stadium Drive/Horizon Drive area which has severe septic system failures. Substandard septic treatment in these areas poses ground- and surface-water quality risks, and is a constraint on additional subdivision of lands and development of residential second units in the residential areas, and limits commercial and mixed use development in the townships¹. While the proposed Community Plan includes a number of policies seeking improvement of substandard septic treatment capabilities in some of these areas, as discussed in Section 4.9 *Water and Wastewater*, no specific projects are proposed at this time. Also, for many areas, improving sewage treatment capabilities would not necessarily result in a substantial removal of a growth impediment, as changes to zoning designations are not proposed, and current zoning designations would still limit the amount of new primary residential growth. The exception to this would be improvements to sewage treatment in the townships of Los Olivos and Ballard. The development of a community wastewater facility that would serve the townships of Los Olivos and Ballard would remove a major obstacle to commercial growth in particular, and would likely result in additional commercial development. However, the 20-year buildout projection analyzed in this EIR assumes the additional development of 555,334 sf of commercial development in the Plan Area (a 44.8% increase over existing commercial development), and a greater amount of primary and secondary residential use in these townships. The additional development under 20-year Plan

¹ The Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Basin restricts commercial development within designated Special Problem Areas to no more than 375 gallons per acre per day.



buildout assumptions would not likely occur unless sewage treatment improvements were made to one or more of these townships, so the growth inducing impact is factored into the 20-year buildout projection. While sewage improvements for residential areas such as the Janin Acres subdivision and the west Santa Ynez areas along Horizon and Stadium Drives would likely be sized to specifically serve these areas without inducing new growth in other areas, the development of improved sewage treatment for Los Olivos and/or Ballard would be sized to serve buildout in these townships, which would be expected to provide improved or additional sewage capacity in these areas as well as potentially for adjacent areas. Improvements to water supply and delivery would also present a potential removal of an obstacle to growth, but sewage treatment limitations are more of an impediment to growth than water service in the Plan Area. Overall, the provision of improved sewage treatment to Special Problem Areas, if so provided, is considered a significant and unavoidable growth inducing impact.

The potential circulation improvements projects identified in Section 4.4 *Traffic and Circulation* would also present a potential removal of an impediment to growth. In particular, the potential Highway 246 bypass would open up roadway access to new areas and lead to potential growth either along the bypass route or along existing roadways as a result of decreased congestion. However, this circulation improvement project has not been programmed, and is only one of a number of possible measures to mitigate potentially significant circulation impacts, hence a full discussion of any potential growth inducing impacts due to the potential construction of this bypass would be speculative at this point.

7.2 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE EFFECTS

CEQA Guidelines §15126(b) requires that an EIR identify those significant impacts that cannot be reduced to a less than significant level with the application of mitigation measures. The implications and reasons why the project is being proposed, notwithstanding, must be described.

Implementation of the proposed Community Plan would result in significant, unavoidable impacts to the following resources:

- ◆ Land Use
- ◆ Parks and Recreation
- ◆ Public Services
- ◆ Biological Resources
- ◆ Air Quality
- ◆ Noise
- ◆ Water/Wastewater
- ◆ Cultural Resources
- ◆ Visual and Aesthetic Resources
- ◆ Agricultural Resources

These resources are examined in depth in Section 4 of this EIR and residual Class I impacts summarized in the Executive Summary.



Proposed mitigation in the form of mitigation measures and revised or new policies, actions, and standards for the Community Plan would limit the extent of significant and unavoidable impacts on these resources. Existing regulations and requirements applied to individual development projects will also help to ensure that resource impacts are minimized. The Community Plan is proposed notwithstanding these potential impacts because the proposed Plan will augment and update the Comprehensive Plan for the Plan Area and provides a Valley-specific planning framework to maintain and preserve the area's unique setting. Furthermore, neither the No Project Alternative nor any of the other alternatives discussed in Section 6.0, *Alternatives* would be able to substantially reduce or eliminate the above-referenced unavoidable impacts.

7.3 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

CEQA Guidelines §15126.2(c) requires a discussion of any significant irreversible environmental changes which would be caused by the proposed project should it be implemented. Such significant irreversible environmental changes may include the following:

- ◆ Use of non-renewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project which would be irreversible because a large commitment of such resources makes removal or non-use unlikely.
- ◆ Primary impacts and, particularly secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) which generally commit future generations to similar uses.
- ◆ Irreversible damage which may result from environmental accidents associated with the project.

The 20-year buildout of the Community Plan would result in the commitment of nonrenewable resources (e.g. energy, water, construction materials) throughout the buildout period. Construction of some of the larger developments and facilities would generally commit future generations to similar uses, depending on the size and location of the parcels on which the development is occurring. No environmental accidents are expected as a result of the provisions of the proposed Community Plan. It should be noted that buildout under the proposed plan would not result in a substantially different environment than under buildout of the existing Comprehensive Plan. Moreover, the proposed Community Plan includes several new policies that seek to protect environmental resources and limit impacts of buildout, such that irreversible changes would be reduced. However, irreversible environmental effects cannot be avoided.

Construction activity that would be accommodated under 20-year Plan buildout would involve the use of building materials and energy, some of which are non-renewable resources. Consumption of these resources would occur with any development in the County and are not unique to the Community Plan Area. The addition of new residential and non-residential development in the Plan Area under buildout conditions would irreversibly increase local demand for non-renewable energy resources such as petroleum and natural gas. Increasingly efficient building fixtures and automobile engines, as well as implementation of policies included in the proposed Plan, are expected to offset the demand to some degree. It is not



anticipated that growth accommodated under the Community Plan would significantly affect local or regional energy supplies.

Growth accommodated under any of the land use scenarios would require an irreversible commitment of additional law enforcement, fire protection, water supply, wastewater treatment, and solid waste disposal services. These impacts are discussed in Sections 4.3 and 4.9. As discussed in Section 4.15, *Agricultural Resources*, the 20-year buildout of the Community Plan would include additional residential and commercial development in agriculturally zoned areas and hence would result in the conversion of Prime agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses. Impacts to agriculture under buildout conditions are unavoidably significant, and would represent an irreversible environmental effect. Impacts to visual character (discussed in Section 4.14 *Visual and Aesthetic Resources*) were similarly determined to be significant and unavoidable under 20-year buildout conditions. This also represents an irreversible environmental effect.

The additional vehicle trips associated with growth under 20-year buildout conditions would incrementally increase local traffic and noise levels and regional air pollutant emissions. As discussed in Section 4.8, *Noise*, implementation of proposed policies and actions, in combination with the additional mitigation measures, could reduce the noise impacts associated with future growth but not to a less than significant level. As discussed in Section 4.4, *Traffic and Circulation*, proposed intersection level of service performance standards could be met with implementation of recommended circulation improvements and Community Plan policies and actions. These improvements, however, would represent irreversible changes to the built environment.

