
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 EIR PURPOSE

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, this **environmental impact report** (EIR) has been prepared by the City of Redwood City to identify, evaluate, and assist the City in mitigating the potential environmental consequences of its Downtown Precise Plan (DPP) project. The project, as articulated in the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Department Downtown Precise Plan (July 15, 2010), is intended to implement a contemporary vision for the City's approximately 183-acre Downtown (DPP) area by establishing new land use, development, and urban design regulations for a 20-year planning period.

One of the primary objectives of the DPP is to establish new land use and development regulations that will produce a unique and robust Downtown within the context of a rich, historic and valued built environment. These regulations would be imposed as "standards" and "guidelines." Standards would be mandatory development regulations, while guidelines would not be mandatory, but rather would be recommendations that would be used to guide new development. These standards and guidelines would address all aspects of potential development in the DPP area, including: (1) permitted uses of property (land uses); (2) density of buildings and structures; (3) building heights and disposition (including massing and shadows); (4) architectural character (including façade design and composition); (5) site design and planning (including building placement, parking, and landscaping); (6) signage; (7) public frontages, streets, and streetscapes; and (8) preservation and maintenance of historic resources.

1.2 CITY APPROVALS

The specific City actions required to implement the DPP include:

- (1) adoption of the Downtown Precise Plan (DPP) itself;
- (2) adoption of a finding that the DPP is consistent with the City's current General Plan (the 1990 General Plan as amended to date) or New General Plan (currently under preparation) if it is adopted prior to the adoption of the DPP; and
- (3) approval of an associated Zoning Map amendment to reflect and implement land uses, development standards, and design criteria specified by the DPP (e.g., rezoning to the City's "P" [Planned Community District] zone to allow housing and mixed use development).

1.3 EIR INTENDED USE

This EIR has been prepared by the City to provide the environmental review and documentation required by CEQA for each of the DPP-related approvals listed above. As used in this EIR, the terms "Redwood City Downtown Precise Plan," "Downtown Precise Plan," "DPP," and "project" are intended to be synonymous and refer to all aspects of the current Downtown Precise Plan proposal, including all of the approval actions listed above.

This EIR is intended to serve as a public information and disclosure document identifying and analyzing those environmental impacts associated with the project that are expected to be significant, and describing mitigation measures and alternatives that could minimize or eliminate significant adverse impacts and increase beneficial effects.¹ Such impacts and needed mitigations are discussed in this EIR to the level of detail necessary to allow reasoned decisions about the project and conditions of project approval. As a result of the information in this EIR, the City Council of Redwood City may act to approve or deny these various project actions, and/or to establish any associated requirements or conditions of approval considered necessary to mitigate identified project impacts on the environment.

As the Lead Agency, and as appropriate under CEQA, the City also intends this EIR to serve as the CEQA-required environmental documentation for consideration of this project by other Responsible Agencies² and Trustee Agencies³ (e.g., San Mateo County Office of Environmental Health, Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Department of Fish and Game) which may have limited discretionary authority over future site-specific development proposals facilitated by this project. In addition, as explained below, as a program EIR, the City may rely on this EIR in evaluating and acting on subsequent, parcel-specific development proposals in the DPP area, to the extent that such future reliance on this EIR is permitted by CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines.

1.4 PROGRAM EIR APPROACH AND ASSUMPTIONS

1.4.1 Program EIR

This EIR is a **program EIR**. A program EIR is a particular type of EIR authorized by section 15168 (Program EIR) of the CEQA Guidelines for use in documenting the environmental implications of community general plans, redevelopment plans, specific plans, precise plans, and other planning "programs." As explained in the CEQA Guidelines, a program EIR is useful in evaluating the potential environmental impacts of a project that involves a series of interrelated actions that can reasonably be characterized as a single project. The CEQA-established program EIR concept and authority are described in more detail in section 21.1 of this EIR (Appendix: Program EIR Authority). The approach taken in preparing this EIR under

¹CEQA Guidelines section 15149(b).

²Under CEQA Guidelines, the term "Responsible Agency" includes all public agencies, other than the Lead Agency, which have discretionary approval power over aspects of the project for which the Lead Agency has prepared an EIR.

³Under CEQA Guidelines, the term "Trustee Agency" means a state agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by the project which are held in trust by the people of California.

the program EIR authority has been to describe the anticipated, community-wide impacts of the DPP. The EIR describes the cumulative, aggregate effects of the combination of potential DPP actions and associated development scenarios on project areawide and community-wide environmental conditions. Such impacts are described at a level of detail consistent with the level of detail provided in the DPP.

This program EIR evaluates the project-related impacts and mitigation measures that can be identified at this time. The more detailed impacts of future individual, site-specific, infrastructure and development projects that may be facilitated by the DPP, but which are not proposed at this time and cannot be described in sufficient detail, are not considered in this program EIR; rather, the CEQA-required environmental review of such subsequent individual actions will be undertaken at a later time, if and when such proposals come before the City in the form of a specific public improvement project or development application. At that time, when the details of the individual action are sufficiently defined, the action will be subject to its own, project-specific, environmental determination by the City in full compliance with CEQA requirements.

1.4.2 Impact Assessment Assumptions

The purpose of this program EIR is to evaluate the likely environmental consequences (both adverse and beneficial impacts) expected from development in the DPP area pursuant to the DPP document, and to describe mitigation measures and alternatives that could minimize or eliminate potentially significant adverse environmental impacts and increase beneficial effects.¹ To undertake this evaluation, it was necessary to make certain assumptions regarding the nature and extent of development that could occur under the DPP. The DPP area buildout assumptions used as the basis for the impact analyses in this program EIR are derived from the land use and site development standards, architectural standards/guidelines, parking recommendations, and streetscape design standards/guidelines described by the DPP document.

The impact analyses in this EIR are based on the conservative (most intensive development) assumption that the DPP will be fully successful in meeting its objectives and, as a result, the DPP area will reach full buildout under the DPP parameters (land use caps) over the next approximately 20 years. Each impact analysis chapter in this EIR (land use and planning; population and housing; aesthetics; cultural and historic resources; transportation and circulation; public services; etc.) includes a description of related existing conditions, followed by a description of DPP-facilitated buildout conditions, and associated impacts and mitigation needs.

1.4.3 Impact Assessment Baseline

CEQA Guidelines sections 15125(a) and (e) stipulate that the existing environmental setting (the environmental conditions in the project vicinity at the time the environmental analysis is begun) should constitute the baseline physical conditions by which it is determined whether an impact is significant. Pursuant to this guideline, all impact assessments in this EIR are based on comparison of the projected future "with project" conditions (i.e., buildout under the proposed DPP) with the existing environmental setting rather than with the future "without project" condition (i.e., buildout under the existing Redwood City Strategic General Plan). For a generalized comparison of anticipated future "with project" conditions with future "without

¹CEQA Guidelines section 15149(b).

project" conditions (i.e., with what would be expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the DPP were not approved), see the discussion of Alternative 1 (No Project: Buildout Under Existing Land Use Policy) in chapter 19 of this EIR (Alternatives to the Proposed Action).

1.5 EIR SCOPE--SIGNIFICANT ISSUES AND CONCERNS

This EIR addresses the following areas of potential environmental impact or controversy known to the Lead Agency (the City of Redwood City), including those issues and concerns identified by the City in its Notice of Preparation (NOP) of this EIR (dated February 26, 2010)¹ and by other agencies, organizations, and individuals in response to the NOP. These environmental concerns relate to the following topics (listed in the order that they are addressed in this EIR):

1. Land use and planning,
2. Population and housing,
3. Aesthetics,
4. Cultural and historic resources,
5. Public services,
6. Transportation and circulation,
7. Utilities and infrastructure,
8. Noise,
9. Air quality,
10. Climate change,
11. Hazards and hazardous materials,
12. Biological resources, and
13. Geology and soils.

1.6 "SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS" AND OTHER KEY EIR TERMINOLOGY

This EIR identifies those adverse environmental impacts that are expected to be "significant," and corresponding mitigation measures that are proposed to eliminate or reduce those impacts to less-than-significant levels. Where it is determined in this report that a particular impact cannot be mitigated to a less-than-significant level, the EIR identifies that impact as "unavoidable." Section 18.2 of the EIR (Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts) includes a summary list of all significant adverse project impacts identified as "unavoidable." Where it is determined that a potentially significant adverse impact can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level by mitigation described in this EIR, that impact is not listed in section 18.2.

These particular EIR terms ("significant," "unavoidable," "mitigation") and other key CEQA terminology used in this report are defined in the box on the following page.

¹The Notice of Preparation (NOP) is a CEQA-required notice sent by the Lead Agency to notify the Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, and potentially involved federal agencies that the Lead Agency plans to prepare an EIR for the project. The NOP is also used to solicit guidance regarding the necessary and appropriate scope and content of the EIR. The City's NOP for the Downtown Precise Plan project is included in section 21.2 (Appendix: Notice of Preparation) of this EIR.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY EIR TERMINOLOGY

Significant/Potentially Significant Impact	"Significant effect on the environment" means a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic and aesthetic significance. (CEQA Guidelines, section 15382.) <i>"An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment. A social or economic change related to a physical change may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant."</i> (CEQA Guidelines, section 15382.)
Significant Cumulative Impact	"Cumulative impacts" are defined as <i>"two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts."</i> (CEQA Guidelines, section 15355.)
Significant Unavoidable Impact	"Unavoidable significant impacts" are defined as those significant adverse environmental impacts for which either no mitigation or only partial mitigation is feasible. If the project is to be approved without imposing an alternative design, the Lead Agency (the City) must include in the record of the project approval a written statement of the specific reasons to support its action--i.e., a "statement of overriding considerations." (CEQA Guidelines, sections 15126.2(b) and 15093(b).)
Significance Criteria	The criteria used in this EIR to determine whether an impact is or is not "significant" are based on (a) CEQA-stipulated "mandatory findings of significance"--i.e., where any of the specific conditions occur under which the Legislature and the Secretary of Resources have determined to constitute a potentially significant effect on the environment, which are listed in CEQA Guidelines section 15065; (b) the relationship of the project effect to the adopted policies, ordinances and standards of the City and of responsible agencies; and/or (c) commonly accepted practice and the professional judgment of the EIR authors and Lead Agency staff.
Mitigation Measures	For each significant impact, the EIR must identify a specific "mitigation" measure or set of measures capable of <i>"(a) avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action; (b) minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation; (c) rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the impacted environment; (d) reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation or maintenance operations during the life of the action; or (e) compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments."</i> (CEQA Guidelines, section 15370.)

SOURCE: Wagstaff/MIG, 2010.

1.7 REPORT ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT

The impact and mitigation information in this EIR is generally organized in chapters under the 13 environmental headings listed above (land use and planning; population and housing; etc.). Each environmental chapter includes sections describing the following for that issue:

- (1) the environmental setting;
- (2) the regulatory setting; and
- (3) impacts and mitigation measures (impacts anticipated with the proposed project and measures recommended to mitigate potential significant adverse impacts).

In addition, this report includes a chapter identifying **cumulative impacts** (chapter 17); a chapter summarizing the EIR information in terms of various **other CEQA-required assessment considerations**, including project "growth-inducing impacts," "significant unavoidable adverse impacts," "irreversible environmental changes," and "effects found not to be significant" (chapter 18); and a chapter identifying and evaluating **alternatives to the proposed action** (chapter 19).