
INTRODUCTION**1.1 OVERVIEW**

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared to analyze the potential environmental impacts associated with the expansion and operation of the existing Redwood City Costco Wholesale. The project proposes the reconstruction of a larger retail warehouse building and fueling center on an approximately 13.65-acre site located at 2300 Middlefield Road in the eastern portion of Redwood City, California.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE EIR**1.2.1 Authority and Intended Uses of the EIR**

The City of Redwood City reviewed the proposed project, and based on their preliminary analysis, has determined that preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) would be required and must be prepared as part of the project's environmental review process, in accordance with CEQA. A Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft EIR was circulated to solicit comments from other agencies and the public on the scope and content of the EIR.

Acting as the Lead Agency, the City of Redwood City has authorized the preparation of an EIR to determine the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. The EIR identifies the potential environmental changes that could occur with the proposed project. The EIR also addresses issues raised in response to the NOP, as provided by various affected and interested agencies. While this EIR has been prepared with consultant support, the analysis and findings in this document have been independently reviewed by the City and reflect the City's conclusions, as required by Section 15084 of the CEQA Guidelines.

The purpose of this EIR is to inform the City, trustee and responsible agencies, decision-makers, and the general public of the environmental effects associated with the construction and implementation of the proposed project. This EIR is an informational document prepared pursuant to CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines and the City's procedures for implementing CEQA. The EIR provides decision-makers, public agencies, and the public in general with detailed information about the potential significant adverse environmental impacts that may occur with the proposed project. The EIR also identifies mitigation measures that would be effective in reducing or avoiding any identified significant adverse environmental impacts. In addition, feasible alternatives to the proposed project are discussed and their potential environmental impacts are compared to those of the proposed project to provide a basis for consideration by decision-makers.

In accordance with Section 15161 of the CEQA Guidelines, this document constitutes a "Project EIR" and has been focused "primarily on the changes in the environment that would result from the development project." The EIR provides decision-makers, public agencies, and the public in general with detailed information about the potential significant adverse environmental impacts of the proposed Redwood City Costco Wholesale project. By recognizing the environmental impacts of the proposed project, decision-makers will have a better understanding of the physical and environmental changes that would accompany approval of the proposed project. The recommended mitigation measures provide the City with methods to substantially reduce or avoid potentially significant adverse environmental impacts, where feasible. As noted, alternatives to the proposed project are presented to evaluate alternative development scenarios that could further reduce or avoid any significant adverse environmental impacts associated with the project.

1.2.2 Agencies Having Jurisdiction

State law requires that Trustee and Responsible Agencies review all EIRs. A *Trustee Agency* is defined in Section 15386 of the State CEQA Guidelines as “a state agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by a project which are held in trust for the people of the State of California.” Per Section 15381 of the CEQA Guidelines, “the term ‘*Responsible Agency*’ includes all public agencies other than the Lead Agency which have discretionary approval power over the project.” There are no Responsible or Trustee Agencies for the Redwood City Costco Wholesale project.

The City of Redwood City is the Lead Agency for the Redwood City Costco Wholesale project. The Redwood City Council would use this EIR in considering approval of the Redwood City Costco Wholesale project. Because there are no natural resources potentially affected by the project, and no discretionary approvals are required from other agencies, the proposed project is not under the jurisdiction of any responsible or trustee agencies.

1.2.3 Availability of the EIR

The City of Redwood City has determined that an EIR is required for the proposed project. Based on this determination, the City complied with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines by issuing a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR on September 9, 2005. The NOP indicated that an EIR would be prepared for the proposed project, and that the City was seeking public comments on environmental issues that needed to be addressed in the EIR. A copy of the NOP is provided in Appendix A and responses to the NOP received by the City are provided in Appendix B.

Upon completion of the Draft EIR, a Notice of Completion and copies of the Draft EIR will be filed with the State Office of Planning and Research to inform interested and affected State and Federal agencies of the availability of the Draft EIR for review and comment. In addition, a Notice of Availability of the Draft EIR will be distributed to local public agencies and to interested organizations and citizens for review and comment. The Draft EIR is available for review at the offices of the Redwood City Community Development Services Department located at 1017 Middlefield Road, Redwood City, California 94063 as well as the Department’s website at <http://www.redwoodcity.org/cds/planning/>, and local City libraries.

Agencies, organizations, and individuals have been invited to comment on the information presented in the Draft EIR during a 45-day public review period. Specifically, comments addressing the scope and adequacy of the environmental analysis have been solicited. Respondents have also been asked to provide or identify additional environmental information that is germane to the project, but which they feel may not have been addressed in the analysis. Following the public review period, responses to all substantive comments are prepared and compiled into the Final EIR. The City of Redwood City, prior to any decision on the project, will consider the Final EIR for certification.

1.2.4 Incorporation by Reference

As permitted by Section 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines, this EIR has referenced several technical studies, analyses, and reports. Information from documents incorporated by reference into this EIR have been briefly summarized in the appropriate section(s) which follow, and the relationship between the incorporated part of the referenced document and the EIR has been described. The documents and other sources, which have been used in the preparation of this EIR, are identified in Section 11.0, *List of Preparers/References*. In accordance with Section 15150(b) of the CEQA Guidelines, the locations

where the public may obtain and review these referenced documents and other sources used in the preparation of the EIR are also identified.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

The environmental analysis contained in this EIR has been developed to adequately address the environmental issues identified as needing further analysis and the concerns raised by comments from the NOP. The environmental impact analysis seeks to determine the significance of potential impacts and to develop appropriate mitigation. To facilitate the analysis of each environmental issue, a standard format has been developed to analyze each environmental issue thoroughly. This format is presented below, with a brief discussion of the information included within each topic.

1.3.1 Environmental Setting

This introductory section describes the existing environmental conditions related to each issue area analyzed in the EIR. In accordance with Section 15125 of the CEQA Guidelines, both the existing local and regional settings are discussed as they exist prior to implementation of the proposed project and when the NOP was published. This section provides the baseline conditions from which environmental changes created by the proposed project would be compared and analyzed.

1.3.2 Threshold of Significance

Section 15126.2 of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR “identify and focus on the significant environmental effects of the proposed project.” “Effects” and “impacts” mean the same under CEQA and are used interchangeably within this EIR. A “significant effect” or “significant impact” on the environment means “a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project” (Section 15382 of the CEQA Guidelines).

In determining whether an impact is “significant,” Section 15064.7 of the CEQA Guidelines encourages each public agency to develop and publish thresholds of significance to use in determining the significance of an environmental impact. These thresholds may consist of identifiable quantitative, qualitative or performance level criteria, of which non-compliance would mean the effect would be determined to be significant and compliance with the thresholds would mean the effect normally would be determined to be less than significant.

Significance criteria used in the analysis in Section 4.0, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, of this EIR are derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. In addition, City policies, standards and thresholds adopted by other public agencies with jurisdiction over select environmental issues are used as thresholds of significance. Also, accepted technical and scientific data is used in other instances to determine if an impact would be considered significant. An effort has been made to avoid overly subjective significance criteria, which are not based in specific CEQA policies, and to use generally accepted thresholds upon which significance can be determined.

For the analysis of the environmental impacts in this EIR, significance criteria from the CEQA Guidelines are identified and have been applied in analyzing the potential effects of the proposed project.

1.3.3 Environmental Impacts

The analysis of environmental impacts presented in the EIR identifies specific project-related direct and indirect, short term and long term, and unavoidable impacts of the proposed project. As described above,

the significance criteria provide the basis for distinguishing between impacts which are determined to be significant (i.e., impacts which exceed the threshold of significance) and impacts which are considered less than significant. The existing environmental setting (i.e., existing conditions) at the time of NOP publication is used as the basis for documenting the nature and extent of changes to the environment or the environmental impacts anticipated to result from project implementation.

In assessing the impacts of the proposed project and the project alternatives discussed in Section 9.0, *Alternatives*, the City has conducted the following analysis:

"Potential effects" of the project are identified. Initially, these potential effects are identified on a cursory level. No determination is made that they truly are "significant", "adverse", or "substantial." This process merely identifies issues of concern and impacts which, on a cursory level, may seem possible or may occur with the proposed project. "Potential effects" include those which have been identified in the preliminary analysis for the project, as well as those raised by the public, the City, and other public agencies during the NOP review process.

With respect to each potential environmental effect, further analysis has been conducted in the EIR to determine if, in fact:

- ◆ The project causes the identified "effect"; and
- ◆ The effect produces a substantial, or potentially substantial change in the physical conditions within the area affected by the project (i.e., "significant"); and
- ◆ The changed conditions are "adverse."

Where the investigation of a potential effect concludes that the effect is too speculative or subjective for evaluation, that conclusion is noted and the discussion of that effect is ended.

Where the investigation demonstrates that a potential effect does or may (without undue speculation) occur, but is beneficial, that conclusion is noted. Where the investigation demonstrates that a potential effect is not significant or not adverse, that conclusion is noted.

1.3.4 Standard Conditions and Mitigation Measures

Where the environmental impact analysis demonstrates that a potential effect does or may (without undue speculation) occur and is found to have a significant or potentially significant **and** adverse impact on existing physical conditions within the area affected by the project, that conclusion is noted and:

- ◆ Existing City, County, State and/or Federal regulations that, through implementation and/or enforcement, would reduce potential environmental impacts are identified;
- ◆ Recommended mitigation measures which would avoid or minimize potentially significant environmental impacts to less than significant levels are identified;
- ◆ Where feasible mitigation measures which could reduce potentially significant environmental impacts to below a level of significance are not available, the significant environmental impact would be identified as one which would result in "significant unavoidable adverse impacts."

1.3.5 Unavoidable Significant Adverse Impacts

Unavoidable significant adverse impacts are those effects that either cannot be mitigated or that remain significant even after implementation of mitigation measures. The level of significance of the identified impacts after mitigation is identified in this section of the EIR.

1.4 SCOPE AND FORMAT OF THE EIR

1.4.1 Scope of EIR

As previously noted, a NOP was prepared for the proposed project and circulated to all identified affected and interested agencies and parties to solicit comments on the scope and analysis to be included in the EIR. Based on the comments received in response to the NOP and the preliminary analysis for the proposed project, the City has determined that the EIR for the proposed Redwood City Costco Wholesale project should address the following environmental issue areas:

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| ■ Land Use, Planning, and Zoning | ■ Geology and Soils |
| ■ Aesthetics | ■ Public Services |
| ■ Traffic, Circulation and Access | ■ Utilities |
| ■ Air Quality | ■ Hazards and Hazardous Materials |
| ■ Noise | ■ Biological Resources |
| ■ Hydrology and Drainage | |

1.4.2 Format of EIR

Environmental analysis of the proposed project is presented in this EIR in the following sections:

- **Executive Summary.** An overview of the EIR, a description of the proposed project and a summary of potentially significant adverse environmental impacts and recommended mitigation measures are presented in this section. The Executive Summary presents a summary of each environmental issue area within the EIR and reflects the outline of the entire EIR. This section also includes the areas of controversy/issues to be resolved derived from the comments received on the NOP.
- **Section 1.0: Introduction.** The purpose of the EIR and a discussion of the public review processes are presented in this section. The introduction also outlines the methodology used in conducting the environmental analysis as well as the scope and format of the EIR.
- **Section 2.0: Environmental Setting.** This section provides a description of the project site's location and existing conditions as well as a discussion of the environment setting in the vicinity of the project site. The local and regional plans and policies applicable to the project are discussed as well.
- **Section 3.0: Project Description.** This section presents a detailed discussion of the proposed project and the discretionary actions needed to implement the proposed project. Project objectives are also presented in this section.
- **Section 4.0: Environmental Analysis.** This section analyzes the environmental impacts of the proposed project under each environmental issue area. The existing environmental setting, potential environmental impacts, and recommended mitigation measures are discussed in this

section. Unavoidable significant adverse impacts after implementation of recommended mitigation measures are also identified.

- **Section 5.0: Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes.** This section describes the potentially significant irreversible environmental changes that may occur with implementation of the proposed project.
- **Section 6.0: Cumulative Impacts.** This section describes a list of past, present, and reasonably anticipated future development projects in the surrounding area, which may potentially contribute to significant cumulative impacts associated with the proposed project. The impacts of these related development projects and the proposed project are analyzed in this section of the EIR.
- **Section 7.0: Growth-Inducing Impacts.** This section describes the project's potential for fostering growth in areas adjacent to the project site or throughout the City.
- **Section 8.0: Impacts Found to be Insignificant.** This section provides a summary of the impacts of the proposed project that were found to be insignificant in Section 4.0, *Environmental Analysis*, and identifies the environmental issue areas where the project was determined not to have the potential to cause significant adverse environmental impacts.
- **Section 9.0: Alternatives.** Projects or development scenarios which may occur on the project site or alternative sites, and which would result in a reduction or avoidance of potentially significant adverse environmental impacts were developed as alternatives to the proposed project and are described in this section. Alternative development scenarios discussed in this section include the No Project Alternative, Fueling Center Only Alternative, New Costco Wholesale Only Alternative, Alternative Site, and Expanded Warehouse and Alternate Fueling Center Location On-site Alternative. Additional alternatives found to be infeasible are also addressed in this section. The environmental impacts associated with the project alternatives presented in this section are analyzed and compared to the environmental impacts of the proposed project.
- **Section 10.0: Mitigation Monitoring Program.** This section contains the draft Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) for the proposed project, which lists all recommended mitigation measures and standard conditions for the proposed project. The MMRP also identifies the responsible parties, time frames for implementation, and monitoring parties.
- **Section 11.0: List of Preparers/References.** Persons and agencies responsible for the preparation of the EIR are identified, along with the agencies and individuals contacted and the reference materials consulted in the course of the EIR's preparation.

The EIR also includes appendices that contain: the Initial Study Checklist, NOP and mailing list (Appendix A), Responses to the NOP (Appendix B), technical studies prepared for the proposed project (Appendices C through F and I through J), and letters received from public service and utility agencies (Appendices G and H) regarding potential impacts to their facilities from the proposed project.