

Section 1

Introduction

1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addresses the potential environmental effects of Kaiser Permanente’s Redwood City Medical Center application for a Master Plan that would guide future development of the 15.3-acre downtown gateway Medical Center and provide flexibility in developing and modifying the facilities to meet the changing needs of medical care and comply with federal and state law. The proposed project includes replacement, enhancement, and construction of inpatient and outpatient medical facilities on the existing Medical Center (within the development parameters discussed in this EIR) in approximately five phases over 22 years between 2003 and 2025. As further detailed in Section 2, Project Description, the proposed Master Plan, which will be implemented in response to the health care delivery requirements of Kaiser, includes 959,300 gross-square-foot (GSF) of medical center uses (hospital, clinical offices, administrative, and support services) and 1,032,100 GSF of parking structures. The Master Plan, which sets out the maximum GSF of buildings and structures proposed for the project site, is as follows:

- A replacement hospital that will include a building base varying from two to four stories upon which would be a 192-bed, six-story tower (for a total of 10 stories, 160 feet in height) totaling 440,000 GSF;
- Four new four- to five-story Medical Office Buildings (MOBs) and a new two-story, Cancer Care Center together totaling 455,200 GSF;¹
- Four new four- to seven-level parking structures providing 2,227 new spaces;
- A new two-level, 28,000-GSF Central Utility Plant (CUP);
- A new two-story, 20,000-GSF Administrative building;
- A 37,500-GSF Main Central Plaza and an additional 30,200-GSF Plaza (for use as a site for potential future expansion of the replacement Hospital); and
- A one-story, 4,800-GSF active commercial use fronting Marshall Street on the ground floor of the parking structure to be located along Marshall Street.

This EIR has been prepared for the City of Redwood City, which is the lead agency for the project. This comprehensive EIR assesses potentially significant impacts including, but not limited to, those concerning land use issues, visual quality, transportation, air quality, noise, hazardous materials, population and housing, public services, and utilities and service systems. As defined in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15382, a “significant effect on the environment” is:

¹ Total GSF includes approximately 25,400 GSF of administrative uses within two of the proposed MOBs.

. . . 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 or aesthetic significance. 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.

This EIR conforms to CEQA, as amended, and the State CEQA Guidelines. As stated in the State CEQA Guidelines, an EIR is an “informational document” with the intended purpose to inform public agency decision-makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effects of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project. Although the EIR does not control the ultimate decision on the project, the City must consider the information in the EIR and respond to each significant effect identified in the EIR. The City of Redwood City will use the certified EIR, along with other information and public processes, to determine whether to approve, modify, or disapprove the proposed project, and to specify any applicable environmental conditions as part of project approvals.

1.2 EIR PROCESS

Draft EIR

Kaiser Foundation Hospitals is preparing the Master Plan to identify the long-range use and development program for the 15.3-acre Kaiser Redwood City Medical Center. The City distributed a Notice of Preparation on September 24, 2002, announcing its intent to prepare and distribute an EIR on Kaiser’s proposed Master Plan. Appendix A contains a copy of the Notice of Preparation.

This Draft EIR assesses the potential significant effects of the overall campus development program. If such effects are identified, the Draft EIR recommends mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate the potentially significant effects. This environmental document is considered a draft under CEQA since it must be reviewed and commented upon by public agencies, organizations, and individuals.

Public Review

This Draft EIR is being distributed for a 45-day public review and comment period. Readers are invited to submit written comments on the adequacy of the document; i.e., does this Draft EIR identify and analyze the possible environmental impacts and recommend mitigation measures? Comments are most helpful when they suggest specific alternatives or measures that would better mitigate the significant environmental effects.

Written comments should be submitted to: Maureen Riordan, Senior Planner
City of Redwood City
1017 Middlefield Road
P.O. Box 391
Redwood City, CA 94064-0391
Fax: (650) 780-0128
e-mail: mriordan@redwoodcity.org

Also, a public hearing will be held before the Redwood City Planning Commission to obtain additional comments from the community. The hearing will be announced in local newspapers and hearing notices will be mailed to responsible agencies and property owners (as said owners are shown on the latest equalized assessment role on which City taxes are collected) located within 300 feet of the Medical Center.

Final EIR

Following the close of the public review and comment period, responses will be prepared that address all substantive written and oral comments on the Draft EIR. The Final EIR will consist of the Draft EIR, the responses to comments received during the public review period, and any revisions to the Draft EIR as a result of public agency and public comments.

Project Review and Approval

The Redwood City Council must ultimately certify that it has reviewed and considered the information in the EIR and that the EIR has been completed in conformity with the requirements of CEQA, before any decision can be made regarding the Master Plan advanced by Kaiser Foundation Hospitals. Pursuant to Section 15091 of the State CEQA Guidelines, no public agency shall approve or carry out a project for which an EIR has been certified which identifies one or more significant effects of the project unless the public agency makes one or more of the following findings:

- a. Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the Final EIR.
- b. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and not the agency making the finding. Such changes have been adopted by such other agency or can and should be adopted by such other agency.
- c. Specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including provision of employment opportunities for highly trained workers, make infeasible the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in the Final EIR.

Statement of Overriding Consideration

When a public agency approves a project that allows the occurrence of significant effects that are identified in the Final EIR but are not at least substantially mitigated, the agency shall state in writing

the specific reasons to support its action based on the Final EIR and/or other information in the record. This is known as a “Statement of Overriding Consideration.” CEQA requires the decision-maker to balance the benefits of a proposed project against its unavoidable environmental risks in determining whether to approve the project. If the benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, the adverse environmental effects may be considered acceptable. If an agency makes a Statement of Overriding Considerations, the statement must be included in the record of the project approval. If the Master Plan is approved, conditions of approval would include a mitigation monitoring program as required by CEQA. The City would use the mitigation monitoring program as a mechanism to control project impacts during and after construction.

1.3 USE OF THIS REPORT

An EIR is an informational document, whose purpose is to make the public and decision-makers aware of the environmental consequences of a project. As noted earlier, the City of Redwood City is the “lead agency” for the EIR. The lead agency is the public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving the project. Thus, the City Council and/or the Planning Commission will review this report and weigh its contents against other economic, social, and neighborhood considerations to determine whether the Kaiser Redwood City Medical Center Master Plan should be approved as proposed, approved but modified, or rejected. If the Master Plan is approved in some form, approval will include adoption of a Precise Plan and Planned Community District (P District) will be established in accordance with Article 52 of the Redwood City Municipal Code.

Various City departments will review this EIR to understand the project’s service demands, permit requirements, and mitigation obligations. For example, the City’s Community Development Services Department will consider the project’s land use, visual, and population and housing implications. The City’s Engineering and Public Works Services Department will review the project’s traffic and utility effects. The surrounding residents and businesses and any other interested individual may review the EIR to evaluate the project’s effects on baseline conditions, especially traffic, parking and noise, and the proposed mitigation measures to reduce potential environmental consequences.

Finally, there are other public agencies besides the lead agency that have discretionary approval over the project. These agencies, known as “responsible agencies,” will also review the Draft EIR and may comment during the public review period. They include:

- the State Office of Statewide Health and Planning Department, because it is the single regulatory office responsible for reviewing and approving plans and specifications for construction, alteration, or additions to hospital buildings;
- the San Francisco Bay Region Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), because it is charged with, among other things, regulating potential impacts to water quality and the issuance of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits for construction projects;

- the San Mateo City/County Association of Governments, because it is concerned with projects that would generate more than 100 peak-hour trips and the effect of those trips on the County’s routes of regional significance;
- the City/County Association of Governments, Airport Land Use Committee, because it is concerned with projects in the vicinity of the San Carlos Airport and the Kaiser Medical Center is about 9,500 feet from the airport runway;
- the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), because it will issue operating permits for utility air pollutant sources, i.e., equipment in the CUP, and operating permits, as required; and
- South Bayside System Authority, because the proposed project may require a Wastewater Discharge Permit from the South Bayside System Authority, which is the regional wastewater treatment plant.

1.4 REPORT ORGANIZATION

This section provides an overview to the EIR. Section 2, Project Description, provides the historical context of the proposed project, the Medical Center’s objectives in pursuing this project, and details of the project’s land use, development, and design features. Section 3, Environmental Analysis, describes the existing conditions in the project vicinity and explains changes to these baseline conditions if the project were approved. The existing conditions focus on physical, environmental topics, such as land use, visual quality, traffic, air quality, noise, hazardous materials, population and housing, public services, utilities and service systems. Each of these topics in Section 3 contains two parts:

- The **Existing Conditions** section provides a general overview of the conditions on and adjacent to the project site. Local, State, and federal regulations are also identified and discussed, when relevant.
- The **Impacts and Mitigation Measures** section provides a brief description of criteria used to evaluate whether an impact is considered significant. These “significance criteria” are based on standards identified in CEQA, State CEQA Guidelines, agency policy or regulations, and/or professional judgment. Significant impacts are enumerated, summarized, and discussed. Mitigation measures that would reduce significant impacts are identified. The significance of the impact after mitigation is also indicated. For impacts found to be less than significant, mitigation measures are not required but may be proposed to further reduce environmental effects.

Section 4, Other CEQA Topics, discusses other topical issues required by CEQA, such as unavoidable adverse effects, growth-inducing effects, and cumulative impacts. Section 5, Project Alternatives, contains a description and assessment of alternatives to the proposed project, including, among others, a No Project Alternative and a Redwood City Preferred Alternative, and discusses the environmentally superior alternative.