

## 4.0 EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

This chapter contains an analysis of each potentially significant environmental issue that has been identified for the Villages at Almond Grove Specific Plan (“project” or “Specific Plan”). The following: 1) identifies how a determination of significance is made; 2) identifies the environmental issues addressed in this chapter; 3) describes the context for the evaluation of cumulative effects; 4) lists the format of the topical issue section; and 5) provides an evaluation of each potentially significant issue in Sections 4.1 through 4.18.

### DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a significant effect is defined as a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in the environment. The CEQA Guidelines direct that this determination be based on scientific and factual data. The impact evaluation in this chapter is prefaced by criteria of significance, which are the thresholds for determining whether an impact is significant. These criteria of significance are based on the CEQA Guidelines and applicable City policies.

### ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THE DRAFT EIR

Sections 4.1 through 4.18 of this chapter describe the environmental setting of the project as evaluated in this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and the impacts that are expected to result from implementation of the proposed project. Mitigation measures are proposed to reduce potential impacts, where appropriate.

1. Aesthetics
2. Agriculture and Forestry Resources
3. Air Quality
4. Biological Resources
5. Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources
6. Energy
7. Geology and Soils
8. Greenhouse Gas Emissions
9. Hazards and Hazardous Materials
10. Hydrology and Water Quality
11. Land Use and Planning
12. Mineral Resources
13. Noise
14. Population and Housing
15. Public Services and Recreation
16. Transportation
17. Utilities and Service Systems
18. Wildfire

### ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This chapter has been prepared in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15125, which states: “An EIR must include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published, or if no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced, from both a local and regional perspective. The environmental setting will normally constitute the baseline physical conditions by which a Lead Agency determines whether an impact is significant. The description of the

environmental setting shall be no longer than is necessary to provide an understanding of the physical effects of the proposed project and its alternatives.”

The Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR for the proposed project was published on August 17, 2018 and then reissued on December 3, 2018. Thus, each of the environmental topical sections in this chapter includes a discussion of physical conditions in the vicinity of the Specific Plan Area on or around December 3, 2018.

## CUMULATIVE ANALYSIS CONTEXT

CEQA defines cumulative impacts as “two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable, or which can compound to increase other environmental impacts.” Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR evaluate potential environmental impacts when the project’s incremental effect is cumulatively considerable. “Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of an individual project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of “reasonably foreseeable probable future” projects, per CEQA Section 15355. Cumulative impacts can result from a combination of the proposed project together with other closely related projects that cause an adverse change in the environment. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over time.

The methodology used for assessing cumulative impacts typically varies depending on the specific topic being analyzed. CEQA requires that cumulative impacts be discussed using either a list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, or a summary of projections contained in an adopted local, regional, or Statewide plan, or related planning document, that describes or evaluates conditions contributing to the cumulative effect. This EIR uses both approaches to evaluate cumulative impacts, and the particular approach used depends on the topical area under consideration. Refer to the cumulative discussion in the individual topic sections for further discussion and the identification of the cumulative study area for each topic.

## FORMAT OF ISSUE SECTIONS

The environmental topical section comprises two primary parts: 1) Environmental Setting, and 2) Impacts and Mitigation Measures. An overview of the general organization and the information provided in the two parts is provided below:

- **Environmental Setting.** The Environmental Setting section for the environmental topic generally provides a description of the applicable physical setting (e.g., existing land uses, existing traffic conditions) for the Specific Plan Area. An overview of regulatory considerations that are applicable to each specific environmental topic is also provided.
- **Impacts and Mitigation Measures.** The Impacts and Mitigation Measures section for the environmental topic presents a discussion of the impacts that could result from implementation of the proposed project. The section begins with the criteria of significance, which establish the thresholds to determine whether an impact is significant. The latter part of this section presents

the impacts from the proposed project and mitigation measures, as appropriate. Cumulative impacts are also addressed.

Impacts are numbered and shown in bold type, and the corresponding mitigation measures are numbered and indented. Impacts and mitigation measures are numbered consecutively and begin with an acronymic or abbreviated reference to the impact section (e.g., TRA for Transportation). The following symbols are used for individual topics:

AES	Aesthetics
AG	Agriculture and Forestry Resources
AIR	Air Quality
BIO	Biological Resources
CUL	Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources
EN	Energy
GEO	Geology and Soils
GHG	Greenhouse Gas Emissions
HAZ	Hazards and Hazardous Materials
HYD	Hydrology and Water Quality
LU	Land Use and Planning
MIN	Mineral Resources
NOI	Noise
POP	Population and Housing
PSR	Public Services and Recreation
TRA	Transportation
UTL	Utilities and Service Systems
WF	Wildfire

Impacts are also categorized by type of impact, as follows: No Impact, Less-Than-Significant, Less-Than-Significant with Mitigation Incorporated, and Potentially Significant.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

Sections 4.1 through 4.18 of this chapter describe the environmental setting of the project as it relates to each specific environmental topic evaluated in the EIR and the impacts that are expected to result from implementation of the proposed project. Mitigation measures are proposed to reduce potential impacts, where appropriate.

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