

## 4.0 SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

This chapter describes existing conditions and evaluates potential environmental impacts that would occur with development of the Ball Estates project (project). **Sections 4.1, Aesthetics**, through **4.17, Utilities and Service Systems**, analyze each resource topic that could be affected by the project. Each section describes the environmental setting as it relates to the specific resource, the impact that could result from implementation of the project, and mitigation measures that would avoid, reduce, or compensate for significant impacts.

### TOPICS ADDRESSED IN THE DRAFT EIR

The following topics are addressed in this chapter:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

### FORMAT OF TOPIC SECTIONS

In general, the analysis of each environmental topic consists of five subsections: Existing Conditions, Regulatory Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures, Cumulative Impacts, and References. An overview of the information included in these sections is provided below.

#### Existing Conditions

According to Section 15125(a) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, existing conditions are the physical environmental conditions in the

vicinity of a project at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published. The NOP for this project was published on August 27, 2013. While the baseline condition for the project is the condition of the site at the time the NOP was issued (e.g., existing land uses, existing soil conditions, existing traffic conditions), given the amount of time that has passed since the publication of the NOP, some of these descriptions are updated to incorporate new relevant information.

## Regulatory Setting

The regulatory setting section provides a description of the relevant regulations and guidelines that pertain to the topical area. This section could contain information from a variety of sources, such as the *Contra Costa County General Plan 2005-2020* (General Plan), or other local, regional, state, or federal agency guidelines or regulations. A policy consistency analysis is also included, providing a brief evaluation and conformity with the applicable policies and regulations. These discussions are intended to comply with Section 15125(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, which requires environmental impact reports (EIR) to include a discussion of any inconsistencies between a proposed project and any pertinent adopted plan. Inconsistency with such policies is not necessarily considered a physical environmental impact.

## Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This subsection lists significance criteria used to evaluate impacts, followed by a discussion of the impacts that would result from implementation of the project. *Thresholds of Significance* subsections define and list specific criteria used to determine impact significance in accordance with adopted criteria.

### *Significance Criteria*

Under CEQA Section 21068, 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. Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines is used as a foundation for the significance criteria used in this draft EIR, with some refinement based applicable Federal, State, and local guidelines and regulations.

### *Evaluation of Impacts*

The evaluation of impacts considers the significance criteria and the level of environmental impact to determine the level of effect. Impacts are classified with three levels of intensity: (1) no impact, (2) a less-than-significant impact, and (3) a significant impact.

A “no impact” designation is used for an issue that would not be affected by project implementation. For example, since the project site is not located in an area

designated to have mineral resources, the project would not result in the loss of any known mineral resources. No impact would occur.

“Less-than-significant” impacts are project-related effects that would not reach or exceed a significance criteria. For example, project impacts to a sensitive biological species would be significant if there was a potential to harm members of the species or reduce habitat. Conversely, impacts would usually be considered less than significant if the habitats and species affected were widespread in the region and in the state and ample habitat remained.

A “significant” designation is used where the environmental impacts would meet or exceed one of the significance criteria.

Impacts are numbered and shown in bold type. For significant impacts, mitigation measures are provided that would reduce the effects of these impacts. Following the discussion of mitigation measures, there is an evaluation of the “Significance after Mitigation.” This is the level of significance after implementation of the proposed mitigation measure(s).

## Cumulative Impacts

CEQA requires an evaluation of a project’s contribution to cumulative environmental impacts. According to Section 15355 of the CEQA Guidelines, cumulative impacts are defined as “two or more individual effects which, when taken together, are considerable, or which can compound or increase other environmental impacts.” As stated in the CEQA Guidelines, an individual project may not have significant impacts; however, in combination with other related projects, these cumulative effects may be considerable. When evaluating cumulative impacts, CEQA recommends one of two methods:

1. Consider past, present, and probable future projects within the region that could result in related or cumulative environmental impacts, including projects outside the control of the lead agency; or
2. Consider projections contained in an adopted local, regional, or statewide plan, or use a prior environmental document which has been adopted or certified for such a plan.

For this draft EIR, the first method was used to identify regional projects for use in the cumulative analyses. Past, present, and probable future development projects within 1 mile of the project site were identified through discussions with the County and the Town of Danville. These projects are listed in **Table 4.1-1**. This cumulative projects list incorporates relevant, reasonably foreseeable projects and focuses on those that, when combined with the project, could contribute to cumulative impacts.

**Table 4.0-1 Projects within 1 Mile of the Project Site**

Project No.	Location	Project Description	Status	Distance from Project Site
LP12-2110	902 Danville Boulevard, Alamo	San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church Addition	Approved in 2014	2,500 feet
MS14-0004	512 Hemme Avenue, Alamo	Three Lot Subdivision	Approved in 2015 (subdivision approved in 2017)	1,000 feet
SD 9382	805/813 La Gonda Way, Danville	Five Lot Subdivision	Approved in 2015	3,700 feet

Source: Contra Costa County, 2017; Town of Danville, 2017.

The spatial boundary for the study of a project's cumulative impacts varies depending on the resource of concern. For example, impacts related to geology and archaeological resources are generally site specific, while air quality and noise impacts can encompass larger areas. Most of the project's impacts are limited in terms of geography, and would not compound impacts from past, existing, or future projects beyond the project area. In these circumstances, CEQA directs that it is not necessary to address in detail the impacts from other projects:

“[w]here a lead agency is examining a project with an incremental effect that is not ‘cumulatively considerable,’ a lead agency need not consider that effect significant, but shall briefly describe its basis for concluding that the incremental effect is not cumulatively considerable” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 (a));

and

“[a]n EIR should not discuss impacts which do not result in part from the project evaluated in the EIR” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 (a)(1).

## REFERENCES

Contra Costa County, 2017. *Department of Conservation and Development Projects List*. Available: <http://www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/4263/Projects>. Accessed July 5, 2017.

Town of Danville, 2017. *Development Activities*. Available: <http://www.danville.ca.gov/Services/Planning-Services/Development-Activities/>. Accessed July 5, 2017.