

2.0 SUMMARY

To aid the public and decision-makers in understanding the findings of an EIR, Guidelines §15123 requires that a summary be provided which discusses the significant environmental effects and mitigation measures, areas of controversy, and issues to be resolved.

2.1 Project Summary

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) discusses the environmental impacts associated with development anticipated under the proposed Cotati Downtown Specific Plan (DSP).

The DSP area is located in the City of Cotati. The proposed Downtown encompasses approximately 59.5 acres, oriented mainly along Old Redwood Highway. The plan is intended to assist with the revitalization of the downtown.

Commercial and Residential land uses are expected to predominate the development mix in the area. The proposed DSP anticipates that approximately 331 additional residential units could be built in the area. The proposed DSP also anticipates construction of 237,050 square feet of new commercial space.

According to the DSP:

The following goals embody the overall direction of and inform the Downtown Specific Plan. Each goal is intended to generate objectives and policies that individually work toward the ultimate intention to revitalize the Specific Plan area.

- Goal 1: Enhance Old Redwood Highway as the downtown, mixed-use center of Cotati community life.
- Goal 2: Maintain the historic character which makes Cotati unique, and achieve a high level of design quality to reinforce this character
- Goal 3: Improve the walking and bicycling system through downtown Cotati as well as the interconnections between Cotati and the region.
- Goal 4: Promote a street system that is safe for all modes of transportation within a successful commercial mixed-use environment.
- Goal 5: Design housing to accommodate a diversity of income levels, ages and needs.
- Goal 6: Encourage development that is sustainable: energy efficient and conserves resources.

2.2 Areas of Controversy Known to the Lead Agency

A few concerns have been presented by the public during the Notice of Preparation review period, and at public meetings.

Members of the public, during a review of the project before the City Council, voiced concern about the reconfiguration of traffic patterns around La Plaza Park. Several people expressed their opinion that the hexagonal intersection would not have the capacity to handle the existing and proposed traffic.

People expressed concerns about the intensification of the downtown area, especially with regard to building heights.

Other comments included concerns about increased traffic, reduced on-street parking and air quality degradation.

2.3 Impacts Found to be Less Than Significant

The following impacts were found to be less than significant based on analysis included in the NOP (see Appendix 1.0):

Agricultural Resources. The project will have no impact on agricultural resources; the plan area does not support agricultural operations.

Mineral Resources. The project will have no impact on mineral resources; the planning area does not include active or planned mineral extraction operations. There are inactive gravel extraction operations in the region.

2.4 Issues to be Resolved

No known issues are remaining to be resolved.

2.5 Summary of Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Table 2.0-1 outlines the impacts of the DSP, their levels of significance, mitigation applied to each impact, if applicable, and the residual level of significance.

Impacts are categorized in the following manner:

- Class I. Significant and Unavoidable
- Class II. Significant but Mitigable
- Class III. Less than Significant
- Class IV. Beneficial

2.6 Summary of Alternatives

Three alternatives were analyzed in Section 6.0 of the EIR:

No Project Alternative. CEQA requires the analysis of the No Project Alternative, which can further be subdivided into two scenarios: the No Project/No Build scenario, in which development in the planning area is held static, and the No Project/Existing General Plan Buildout scenario, which assumes development of the planning area in accordance with the existing General Plan. Both scenarios are analyzed.

Under the No Project/No Build scenario, the existing conditions of Downtown Cotati would remain as they are. Under the No Project/Existing General Plan Buildout scenario, there would be approximately 497,000 square feet of non-residential use, and 595 units of residential development.

Reduced Development Alternative. A reduced development alternative would decrease the amount of residential units and commercial square footage within the planning area. This would reduce the number of people both living within the planning area and driving into the planning area for services. The alternative analyzed herein assumes reduction in buildout by one-third. This alternative would reduce impacts to air quality, traffic and other issue areas.

Residential/Commercial Land Use Alternative

A great number of variables within the DSP area were explored in the public arena through the planning process. A week-long charrette was held, which provided an opportunity to look at many alternative plans for the downtown. The options considered are reflected in the discussion contained in the Draft DSP. The planning process, which involved citizens and decision-makers, explored these alternatives in a meaningful way, such that the relative costs and benefits of the options were evaluated, along with whether the objectives of the process were achieved. This process complemented the CEQA alternative selection process.

The DSP is the result of carefully considering many possibilities, and arriving at a general consensus among the public, officials and experts as to what makes the “best” plan. Many variations of the DSP are possible, including different mixes of residential and commercial development. Alternatives which adjust the mix of commercial and residential development can be useful in determining the relative impacts of different types of land use. For example, commercial land uses tend to generate more traffic, and residential land uses place greater demands on services. Two sub-alternatives are considered in the analysis: (a) one which emphasizes residential land uses over commercial land uses, and (b) one which dedicates a greater amount of land to non-residential use.

Environmentally Superior Alternative. The environmentally superior alternative is the Project.

