

1. INTRODUCTION

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) assesses the potential environmental effects of the adoption and implementation of the proposed General Plan, adoption and implementation of the revised Zoning Code and Subdivision Code, an amendment to the Noise Code (which is a new component of the General Plan 2025 Program), and adoption and implementation of the Magnolia Avenue Specific Plan, as well as the adoption and implementation of the Citywide Design and Sign Guidelines, which are all proposed by the City of Riverside. The City's intention, as Lead Agency (per §21067 of the California Environmental Quality Act), is to adopt these documents simultaneously, with the exception of the Magnolia Avenue Specific Plan. The City published drafts of these documents in November 2004, with the exception of the amendment to the Noise Code and the Magnolia Avenue Specific Plan. The Magnolia Avenue Specific Plan will be published in draft with the recirculation of this DEIR and reviewed at subsequent public hearings, following the other five documents.

This Program EIR has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (Public Resources Code, Section 21000 *et seq.*) and the *Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act* (CEQA Guidelines) published by the Public Resources Agency of the State of California (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 *et seq.*), and in accordance with the City of Riverside's CEQA Guidelines.

The report was prepared by professional environmental consultants under contract to the City of Riverside. The City of Riverside is the lead agency for the preparation of this EIR as defined by CEQA (Public Resources Code Section 21067 as amended), and the content of the document reflects the independent judgment of the City.

This Program EIR is intended to provide information to public agencies, the general public and decision makers regarding potential environmental impacts related to the six components of the Project:

- 1) adoption and implementation of the proposed General Plan,
- 2) adoption and implementation of the revised Zoning Code,
- 3) adoption and implementation of the revised Subdivision Code,
- 4) adoption and implementation of an amendment to the Noise Code,
- 5) adoption and implementation of the Magnolia Avenue Specific Plan (MASP) and
- 6) adoption and implementation of the Citywide Design and Sign Guidelines.

The purpose of an EIR, under the provisions of CEQA, is “to identify the significant effects on the environment of a project, to identify alternatives to the project, and to indicate the manner in which those significant effects can be mitigated or avoided.” (Public Resources Code Section 21002.1[a])

According to CEQA Guidelines (Section 15168), a Program EIR may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project, are related geographically, and as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions in connection with issuance of rules, regulations or plans. The Program EIR allows for a more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives

that would be practical in an EIR on separate individual actions, and ensures consideration of cumulative impacts that might be slighted on a case-by-case basis.

This Program EIR provides a first tier analysis of the potential environmental effects of the Riverside General Plan. Section 15152 of the CEQA Guidelines indicates that tiering is appropriate when the sequence of analysis is from an EIR prepared for a general plan, policy or program to an EIR or negative declaration for another plan, policy or program of lesser scope, or to a site specific EIR or negative declaration if additional analysis is necessary. Subsequent activities in accordance with the Project examined in light of this Program EIR to determine whether an additional environmental document must be prepared. If a subsequent project or later activity would have effects that were not examined in this Program EIR, or not examined at an appropriate level of detail to be used for the later activity, an initial study would need to be prepared to determine the appropriate environmental document. If the City finds that pursuant to Section 15152 of the CEQA Guidelines, no new effects could occur or new mitigation measures would be required on a subsequent project, the City can approve the activity as being within the scope of the Project covered by this Program EIR, and no new environmental documentation would be required. In addition, the standards relating to subsequent EIRs at CEQA Guidelines Section 15162-15164 and Public Resources Code Section 21166 are applicable to this Program EIR.

This EIR serves as an information document for use by public agencies, the general public and decision makers. This EIR is not a City of Riverside policy document; it does, however, discuss the impacts of development pursuant to the proposed General Plan and related components, and analyzes Project alternatives.

Background

The Program EIR serves as the basis for environmental review and impact mitigation for adoption and implementation of the General Plan update and supporting documents. The City will review subsequent projects for consistency with the Program EIR and prepare appropriate environmental documentation pursuant to CEQA provisions for Program EIRs and subsequent projects. Subsequent projects under the Program EIR may include but, are not necessarily limited to the following implementation activities:

- Rezoning of properties
- Approval of Specific Plans
- Approval of development plans, including tentative maps, variances, conditional use permits, and other land use permits
- Approval of development agreements
- Approval of facility and service master plans and financing plans
- Approval and funding of public improvement projects
- Approval of resource management plans
- Issuance of municipal bonds
- Issuance of permits and other approvals necessary for implementation of the General Plan
- Acquisition of property by purchase or eminent domain
- Annexations into the City

To define the scope of the investigation of the Program EIR, the City of Riverside distributed a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on February 23, 2004, to City, County and State agencies; other public agencies; and interested private organizations and individuals, in accordance with the requirements of the California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Sections 15082(a), 15103, and 15375. An Initial Study was not prepared with the NOP; CEQA Guidelines Section 15063 (a) permits a lead agency to omit an initial study if it determines that an EIR is clearly required. The purpose of the NOP was to identify agency and public concerns regarding potential impacts of the proposed Project. Comment letters were received from the following (listed in the order received):

- Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority
- Southern California Association of Governments
- Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District
- Riverside County Waste Management District
- Riverside Transit Authority
- Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
- City of Corona – Planning
- California Department of Conservation’s Division of Land Resource Protection

In addition to these letters, City Planning staff received oral comments at a March 2004 scoping meeting. Written comments received during the 30-day public review period for the NOP are included in **Appendix A** of this EIR. Technical documents prepared for the project are also included in **Appendices B** through **I**. These documents were used as reference material in the analysis of environmental impacts.

In November 2004, the City of Riverside circulated a Draft EIR for the General Plan, updates to the Zoning Code and Subdivision Code, MASP, and the Citywide Design and Sign Guidelines. In the process of reviewing the comments received on the previously circulated Draft EIR, the City determined to recirculate the Draft EIR pursuant to Section 15088.5 of the CEQA Guidelines. Seventeen written comments were received on the November 2004 circulated Draft EIR document; however per Section 15088.5(f)(1) written comments received to date on the previous Draft EIR will not be formally responded to in writing. Therefore, while prior comments will remain part of the administrative record, only new comments on this recirculated Draft EIR will be addressed in the Final EIR.

Scope of the EIR

In accordance with Public Resources Code Section 21002.1, the purpose of this EIR is to address the potential environmental impacts resulting from the construction and operation of the proposed project, proposed mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant environmental impacts, and identify and evaluate alternatives, which could reduce or avoid the significant effects of the proposed project. Although most of the project components involve “paper” projects, meaning that the Zoning Code, Subdivision Code, Noise Code, MASP, and Citywide Design and Sign Guidelines are really policy documents that do not have direct physical impacts to the land and are tools that will be used by the City to implement the General Plan, most of the analysis in this EIR will be addressing when applicable, the foreseeable physical impacts of

implementing the General Plan, as this document creates the blueprint of future development in the City. The other aspects of the project are analyzed as appropriate within each issue area. The EIR process provides an opportunity for the public to review and comment upon the potential environmental impacts of the project proposed.

Format of EIR Document

This EIR is organized into eight sections:

Section 1.0 is this Introduction, which describes the scope and purpose of the EIR document, a brief summary of the CEQA process to date, as well as the format of the document is established.

Section 2.0 is the Executive Summary, which includes a brief project description and summarizes project objectives, alternatives, impacts, and mitigation measures.

Section 3.0 provides a detailed description of the proposed Project.

Section 4.0 provides a brief environmental setting discussion.

Section 5.0 analyzes Project impacts and identifies mitigation measures designed to reduce significant impacts. This section addresses the following environmental issue areas:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Mandatory Findings

Section 6.0 provides an analysis of alternatives to the proposed Project.

Section 7.0 provides an analysis of cumulative impacts, growth inducing impacts, significant irreversible environmental impacts, and areas of no significant impact.

Section 8.0 contains reference information.

The Appendices consist of the Notice of Preparation, Responses to the Notice of Preparation, a proposed General Plan map and maps of the parcels affected by renaming of zones and the Project process, and technical documents supporting the EIR. In compliance with Public Resources Section 21081.6, a mitigation monitoring and reporting program will be prepared that will be adopted in conjunction with certification of the Final EIR and project approval.

This page intentionally left blank.