

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The County of El Dorado (County) has prepared this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to provide an assessment of the potentially significant environmental effects of the proposed El Dorado Hills Apartments project (“proposed project”), located on the northwestern corner of the intersection of Town Center Boulevard and Vine Street within the Town Center East Commercial Center in the unincorporated community of El Dorado Hills. As required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this Draft EIR (1) assesses the potentially significant environmental effects of the proposed project, including cumulative impacts of the proposed project in conjunction with other reasonably foreseeable development; (2) identifies feasible means of avoiding or substantially lessening significant adverse impacts; and (3) evaluates a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project, including the No Project alternative.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS EIR

The purpose of this EIR is to inform decision makers for the County of El Dorado, other responsible agencies, and the public of the environmental consequences of implementing the project as proposed. The EIR has been prepared in accordance with and in fulfillment of the *CEQA Statute and Guidelines (State CEQA Guidelines)*. The County of El Dorado is the Lead Agency for this EIR. The County of El Dorado Board of Supervisors has the principal responsibility for authorizing the implementation of the project as proposed.

As described in CEQA and the *State CEQA Guidelines*, public agencies are required to avoid or substantially lessen significant environmental effects of a project where feasible. A public agency has an obligation to balance the potential significant effects on the environment from the implementation of a proposed project with its benefits, including economic, social, technological, legal, and other benefits. This Draft EIR is an informational document, the purpose of which is to identify the potentially significant effects of the proposed project on the environment and to indicate the manner in which those significant effects can be avoided or lessened; to identify any significant and unavoidable adverse impacts that cannot be mitigated; and to identify reasonable and feasible alternatives to the proposed project that would eliminate any significant adverse environmental effects or reduce the impacts to a less than significant level.

The Lead Agency is required to consider the information in the EIR, along with any other relevant information, in making its decisions on the proposed project. Although the EIR does not determine the ultimate decision that the Board of Supervisors will make regarding implementation of the proposed project, CEQA requires the Lead Agency to consider the information in the EIR and make findings

regarding each significant effect identified in the EIR. If the Board of Supervisors determines the EIR to be adequate, it will certify the Final EIR prior to taking action on the proposed project and requested entitlements. Other agencies may also use this EIR in their review and approval processes.

1.2 SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

1.2.1 Background

The project site is within the Village T area of a larger master planned community identified as the El Dorado Hills Specific Plan (EDHSP) area. The EDHSP was approved in July 1988, along with a certified Environmental Impact Report (EIR [SCH No. 86122912]), by the Board of Supervisors. Village T comprises the El Dorado Hills Town Center East (TCE) Commercial Development Plan area, a 925,000-square-foot commercial center. In August 1995, the Board of Supervisors approved the Planned Development Permit (PD94-0004) for establishing the official Commercial Development Plan for the El Dorado Hills TCE. In conjunction with approval of the TCE project, the Board adopted a Mitigated Negative Declaration.

Since approval of the TCE project, development of the Village T area has occurred in phases. All roads (both public and private), site accesses, and amenities (such as Town Center Lake, trails) within the TCE area have been constructed, and the majority of the planned buildings have been built. The project site is one of the few remaining vacant properties in the TCE area.

In January 2014, the project applicant proposed a 250-unit apartment complex on the project site and requested a number of entitlements to facilitate construction and occupancy of the proposed project. The requested entitlements included: (1) a General Plan Amendment (A14-0001) to add a new policy that would increase the maximum allowed density on the project site; (2) an amendment to the EDHSP (SP86-0002-R) to allow multi-family residential on the project site; (3) a rezone (Z14-0001) of the project site to allow multi-family residential; (4) and a revision to the TCE development plan (PD94-0004-R) to allow multi-family residential on the project site.

On December 2, 2014, the Board certified an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) tiered from the previous CEQA documentation for the project, and approved the requested entitlements. The legal validity of the IS/MND and the other approvals are the subject of ongoing litigation; although a trial court has issued a judgment and writ in that litigation, the trial court's rulings are currently stayed, pending the outcome of an appeal.

The proposed project is a modified version of the project that was approved in December 2014 and is now in litigation. The project applicant is seeking new approvals to authorize the modified project. The litigation concerning the original version of the project will continue to its conclusion, unless the County approves the modified project and certifies the EIR, and those approvals and certification become final and effective, before the appellate proceedings terminate.

1.2.2 Proposed Project

The applicant proposes to construct a 4-story, 214-unit apartment complex, comprising two apartment buildings, a parking structure, outdoor recreation areas, and an informal open space area. The apartment units would range from 576 square feet to 1,195 square feet in size, with a mix of 114 studio/1-bedroom units and 100 2-bedroom units. A 5-level parking structure located in the middle of the complex would provide approximately 409 vehicle parking spaces and 22 motorcycle parking spaces for residents and visitors, with an additional five spaces of surface parking provided elsewhere on the site. The residential buildings would be between 42 and 52 feet in height, with some architectural elements reaching 60 feet. The parking structure would be 60 feet in height.

The proposed project would be designed in conformance with the proposed *El Dorado Hills Town Center East Urban Infill Residential Area Residential Design Guidelines and Development Standards* (EDH Design Guidelines). Way-finding, security lighting, and perimeter fencing would be provided in conformance to EDH Design Guidelines and County standards. The proposed project would provide ornamental landscaping within the interior common areas and along the perimeter that would be consistent with the existing landscaping in the TCE area.

Four entitlements would be necessary to facilitate construction and occupancy of the proposed project:

- 1) General Plan Amendment (A16-0001) adding a new Policy under Objective 2.2.6 (Site Specific Policy Section) to increase the maximum residential density allowed in the General Plan from 24 dwelling units per acre to a maximum of 47 dwelling units per acre specifically for the 4.56-acre project site within the TCE Planned Development area identified as Assessor's Parcel Numbers 121-290-60, 61, and 62.
- 2) El Dorado Hills Specific Plan Amendment (SP86-0002-R-2) incorporating multi-family residential use, density, and related standards for the project site. The project site would be designated as "Urban Infill Residential" within the Village T area of the El Dorado Hills Specific Plan.
- 3) Rezoning (Z16-0004) of the project site from General Commercial-Planned Development (CG-PD) to Multi-Family Residential-Planned Development (RM-PD) and revisions to the RM-zone district development standards applicable to the proposed 214-unit apartment project.
- 4) Revision to the approved TCE Development Plan (PD94-0004-R-3) incorporating multi-family residential use, density, and related design and development standards for the proposed 214-unit apartment project within Planning Area 2 of the TCE Plan area.

1.3 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The County issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for this Draft EIR on April 7, 2017 and circulated it for 30 days. A scoping meeting was held at El Dorado Hills Fire Department, 1050 Wilson Boulevard, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762 on April 25, 2017.

The County has filed a Notice of Completion (NOC) with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse indicating that this Draft EIR has been completed and is available for review and comment by the public.

The Draft EIR will be available for review by the public and interested parties, agencies, and organizations for a review period of 46 days, as required by California law. In reviewing the Draft EIR, reviewers should focus on the document's adequacy in identifying and analyzing significant effects of the proposed project on the environment and ways in which the significant effects of the project might be avoided or mitigated. To ensure inclusion in the Final EIR and full consideration by the Lead Agency, comments on the Draft EIR must be received in writing during the 45-day public review period at the following address:

Contact:

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Responses to comments on the Draft EIR will be prepared and included in the Final EIR. The Draft EIR text and appendices, together with the response to comments document and any text changes to the Draft EIR made in response to comments or other new information, will constitute the Final EIR.

The County of El Dorado will review the Final EIR for adequacy and consider it for certification pursuant to the requirements of Section 15090 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*. If the County certifies the Final EIR, it will then consider the project separately for approval or denial. If the County chooses to approve the project, findings on the feasibility of reducing or avoiding significant environmental effects will be made and, if necessary, a Statement of Overriding Considerations will be prepared. If the County approves the project, a Notice of Determination (NOD) will be prepared and filed with the State Clearinghouse and the County Clerk. The NOD will include a description of the project, the date of approval, an indication of whether the Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations were prepared, and the address where the Final EIR and record of project approval are available for review.

1.4 SCOPE OF THIS EIR

The County of El Dorado completed an Initial Study for the proposed project, as described in Section 15063 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, and determined that a Project EIR would be prepared. Based on the Initial Study (which was made available to the public on the County website, with the web address included in the NOP for this EIR) and comments received during the 30-day scoping period, the County determined that the following key resource topics would be evaluated in detail in the Draft EIR:

- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources, including Tribal Cultural Resources
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Public Services, including Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Energy

1.5 REPORT ORGANIZATION

This Draft EIR is organized into the following sections:

Section 1.0, Introduction, provides an introduction and overview describing the purpose of this EIR, the resource topics addressed in this Draft EIR, and the environmental review process.

Section 2.0, Executive Summary, presents a brief description of the proposed project, summarizes environmental consequences that would result from implementation of the proposed project, provides a summary table that denotes anticipated significant environmental impacts, describes identified mitigation measures, and indicates the level of significance of impacts before and after mitigation. In addition, this section also presents a brief description of alternatives to the proposed project and provides a table comparing each of the alternatives to the proposed project. The summary also presents areas of controversy relative to the proposed project that are known to the Lead Agency.

Section 3.0, Project Description, describes the proposed project, including the proposed land uses, on-site parking and circulation, as well as other improvements such as pedestrian facilities, landscaping, and utilities to serve the proposed development. It also lists the approvals and authorizations needed for the proposed project and lists the Lead and Responsible agencies with discretionary approval authority relative to the proposed project.

Section 4.0, Environmental Impact Analysis, describes the environmental setting, including applicable plans and policies for each environmental topic identified above; provides an analysis of the significant

project-level and cumulative environmental impacts of the proposed project; and identifies mitigation measures to avoid or reduce the magnitude of significant impacts.

Section 5.0, Alternatives, summarizes alternatives to the proposed project and the comparative environmental consequences of each alternative. This section includes an analysis of the No Project alternative, among others.

Section 6.0, Other CEQA Considerations, provides a discussion of the project's significant and unavoidable impacts and significant irreversible environmental changes, the potential for growth inducement due to project implementation, and mandatory findings of significance.

Section 7.0, Report Preparation, provides a list of the individuals involved in the preparation of the Draft EIR, including Lead Agency staff and consultants.

Appendices to this Draft EIR include the technical reports used to prepare the Draft EIR sections, as well as the Initial Study and NOP.