

I Introduction

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared on behalf of the City of Fairfield (City) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code Section 21000, *et seq.*). This EIR analyzes potential environmental impacts of the adoption and implementation of the goals, policies, and actions and the projected buildout of the Fairfield Forward 2050: City of Fairfield General Plan update, as well as strategies and actions proposed in Fairfield’s Climate Action Plan (CAP). These components constitute the Proposed Project, hereinafter referred to as the “Proposed Project.” This chapter outlines the purpose and overall approach to the preparation of the EIR. The City is the lead agency responsible for ensuring that the Proposed Project complies with CEQA. “Lead agency” is defined by Section 21067 of CEQA as “the public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project which may have a significant effect upon the environment.”

I.1 Purpose of the EIR

The primary intent of CEQA is to ensure that public agency decision-makers document and consider the environmental implications of their actions in order to avoid or minimize environmental damage that could result from the implementation of a project wherever feasible, and to balance environmental, economic, and social objectives. The purpose of an EIR 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 (CEQA Section 21002.1).

PURPOSE

This EIR serves the following purposes:

- To satisfy CEQA requirements for analysis of environmental impacts by including a complete and comprehensive programmatic evaluation of the physical impacts of adopting and implementing the Proposed Project;
- To recommend a set of measures to mitigate any significant adverse impacts;
- To analyze a range of reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Project;
- To inform decision-makers and the public of the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Project prior to taking action on the Proposed Project, and to assist City officials in reviewing and adopting the Proposed Project; and

- To provide a basis for the review of subsequent development projects and public improvements proposed within the city. Subsequent environmental documents may be tiered from the Final EIR.

The Proposed Project consists of a regulatory framework to accommodate the future development of the city, as described in Chapter 2: Project Description. This EIR contains analysis of all potential environmental impacts expected to result from implementation of the various policies and programs identified as part of the Proposed Project, including those that serve to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. In accordance with CEQA requirements, this EIR also identifies and evaluates alternatives to the Proposed Project, a No Project Alternative, Alternative 1: New Neighborhoods and Connections; and Alternative 2: Transformed Corridors and Transit Oriented Development. An environmentally superior alternative is identified as part of the Alternatives analysis.

This EIR evaluates at a programmatic level the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Project given its 2050 planning horizon. It can be anticipated that conditions will change; however, the assumptions used are the best data and information available at the time of EIR preparation and reflect existing knowledge of patterns of development.

INTENDED USES OF THE EIR

The California Environmental Quality Act, Public Resources Code Section 21000, *et seq.* (CEQA) Guidelines (Section 15124(d)) require EIRs to identify the agencies that are expected to use the EIR in their decision-making, and the approvals for which the EIR will be used. This EIR will inform the City, in addition to other responsible agencies, persons, and the general public, of the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Project and the identified alternatives. The City will use the EIR as part of its review and approval of the Proposed Project. Other agencies that may use the EIR include local and regional agencies such as the Fairfield Police Department (FPD), the Fairfield Fire Department (FFD), the Fairfield Suisun Unified School District (FSUSD) and Travis Unified School District (TUSD), Fairfield Suisun Sewer District (FSSD), the Solano Irrigation District (SID), the Solano Transit Authority (STA), and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG); and State agencies such as the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

1.2 Approach and Scope of the EIR

TYPE OF EIR

This EIR is a program EIR, defined in Section 15168 of the CEQA Guidelines as: “[An EIR addressing a] series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either: (1) Geographically; (2) A[s] logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions; (3) In connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or (4) As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental impacts which can be mitigated in similar ways.”

Program EIRs can be used as the basic, general environmental assessment for an overall program of future projects, policies, and related implementation actions, such as the Proposed Project. A program EIR has several advantages. First, it provides a basic reference document to avoid unnecessary repetition of facts or analysis in subsequent project-specific assessments. Second, it allows the lead agency to look at the broad, regional impacts of a program of actions before its adoption and eliminates redundant or contradictory approaches to the consideration of regional and cumulative effects.

As a programmatic document, this EIR presents an assessment of the potential impacts of the Proposed Project on the entirety of the Planning Area which encompasses about 278 square miles, shown in Figure 2-2 in the Project Description. It does not separately evaluate subcomponents of the Proposed Project, nor does it assess project-specific impacts of potential future developments under the Proposed Project, all of which are required to comply with CEQA and/or the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as applicable.

As a program EIR, the preparation of this document does not relieve the sponsors of specific projects from the responsibility of complying with the requirements of CEQA (and/or NEPA for projects requiring federal funding or approvals). As noted, individual projects are required to prepare a more precise, project-level analysis to fulfill CEQA and/or NEPA requirements. The lead agency responsible for reviewing these projects shall determine the level of review needed, and the scope of that analysis will depend on the specifics of the particular project. These projects may, however, use the discussion of impacts in this EIR as a basis of their assessment of these regional, citywide, or cumulative impacts, provided that the projects are consistent with the Proposed Project and the data and assumptions used in this EIR remain current and valid.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE AREAS

Information gathered about the environmental setting is used to define relevant planning issues, determine thresholds of significance, and evaluate potential impacts. Based on the initial analysis of environmental setting and baseline conditions in the Notice of Preparation (NOP) and comments on the NOP, both of which are included in Appendix A of this DEIR, the following issues are analyzed in this program EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural, Historic and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Energy, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Climate Change
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality

- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

PLANNING HORIZON

For analytic purposes in this EIR, the base year is 2024 and the horizon year representing future conditions is 2050, unless otherwise noted. In cases where current data is not available, the most recent known data is used to depict baseline conditions. The horizon year of 2050 represents the target year of the Proposed Project when projects and programs are anticipated to be fully implemented.

The Fairfield CAP has a baseline year of 2020, which represents the most recent year for which complete, sector-specific data for the City of Fairfield was available at the time the Fairfield Forward 2050 General Plan Update and CAP project was initiated. This is also a good baseline year because it aligns with the regulatory target year established by AB 32 and reflects more current regulations, level of activity, and other factors that characterize existing GHG emissions generated by Fairfield.

ALTERNATIVES

CEQA requires EIRs to evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives to the Proposed Project that could feasibly attain most of the basic project objectives and would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant environmental impacts. This EIR evaluates three alternatives including a No Project Alternative, a New Neighborhoods and Connections Alternative, and a Transformed Corridors and Transit-Oriented Development Alternative. These alternatives were developed as part of the General Plan process to help the community understand the tradeoffs of different land use concepts. An environmentally superior alternative is identified as part of the Alternatives analysis.

1.3 Planning Process and Public Involvement

NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A NOP for the EIR on the Proposed Project was submitted to the State Clearinghouse on August 16, 2021, and recirculated on March 22, 2024, to reflect adoption to the Housing Element, a new Environmental Justice Element, and targeted amendments to the specific plans. The NOP was circulated among relevant State and local agencies, as well as to members of the public. The city

received a total of 11 comment letters, including eight from State public agencies and three comment letters from individuals or organizations over the course of both public review periods. The NOP and comments on the NOP received by the city are included as Appendix A of this EIR. Consistent with legal requirements and State guidance, an EIR Scoping Meeting was held at a Fairfield Planning Commission meeting on September 8, 2021, and again on Zoom on April 9, 2024, to receive suggestions on scope and content for the EIR; solicit input on potential impacts, mitigation measures, and alternatives to consider; and consult with public agencies responsible for natural resources, other regulatory bodies, neighboring communities, Native American tribes, and members of the public. Comments on the NOP, along with input received during public workshops and meetings over the course of the Proposed Project's process, have helped to identify the major planning and environmental issues and concerns and establish the framework of this EIR.

TRIBAL CONSULTATION (SB 18 AND AB 52)

Senate Bill (SB) 18, codified in California Government Code (CGC) Section 65352.3, requires local governments to consult with California Native American tribes identified by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) for the purpose of protecting, and/or mitigating impacts to cultural places prior to the adoption or amendment of a general plan. Additionally, Assembly Bill (AB) 52 requires tribal cultural resources to be addressed under CEQA and established requirements for consultation with Native American tribes as part of the CEQA process, providing both federal and non-federally recognized tribes the right to formal consultation with project lead agencies (California Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21080.3.1). In accordance with SB 18 and AB 52, the City contacted the NAHC on August 4, 2021, and again on March 3, 2024, to request a consultation list of tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the city. Upon receipt of a list of tribal contacts, the City contacted tribal representatives on March 22, 2024, providing information about the planning process and inviting them to initiate consultation under AB 52 if desired. No formal request for tribal consultation has been received. Correspondence with the NAHC and tribal contacts is included in Appendix B.

The record search of the NAHC Sacred Lands File (SLF) was completed and the results were positive. As such, the environmental setting in the Planning Area and the sites of known Native American archaeological resources in the Planning Area indicate that there is potential for the Planning Area to contain tribal cultural resources from past Native American activities.

DRAFT EIR REVIEW

The CEQA Guidelines establish that the public review period for a draft EIR shall be no shorter than 30 days and no longer than 60 days. The public review period for a draft EIR that has been submitted to the State Clearinghouse for review by State agencies shall be no shorter than 45 days (CCR 15105). This Draft EIR is available for review to the public and interested and affected agencies for a period of 45 days. The purpose of the review period is to obtain comments "on the sufficiency of the document in identifying and analyzing the possible impacts on the environment and ways in which the significant effects of the project might be avoided and mitigated" (CCR Section 15204). The EIR and appendices are available for review at City Hall on the second floor (1000 Webster Street), the Fairfield Cordelia Library (5050 Business Center Drive), and the Fairfield Civic Center Library (1150 Kentucky Street) and online at www.fairfieldforward.com.

Please submit comments on this Draft EIR in writing or via email to:

Jessie Hernandez, Associate Planner
City of Fairfield
1000 Webster St, 2nd Floor
Fairfield, CA 94533
Email: jhernandez@fairfield.ca.gov
Phone: 707-428-7450

After the close of the public review period, City staff and CEQA consultants will review the comments, respond to the comments received, and determine whether any changes are required to the EIR. The City Council will then consider certification of the Final EIR. Subsequent to certification of the Final EIR, the City Council may approve the Proposed Project. If the City Council approves the Proposed Project, a Notice of Determination will be filed with the State Office of Planning and Research and the Clerk of Solano County.

1.4 Other Relevant Plans and Environmental Studies

Plans and studies relevant to the Proposed Project include the following:

- Solano County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (2022)
- Plan Bay Area 2050 (2023)
- Solano County Subregion 6th Cycle Housing Needs Allocation Plan 2023-2031 (2021)
- City of Fairfield 6th Cycle Housing Element, 2023-2031 (2023)
- City of Fairfield Heart of Fairfield Specific Plan (2017)
- City of Fairfield Train Station Specific Plan (2014)
- Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan (2024)
- Travis Air Force Base Land Use Compatibility Plan (2015)
- Solano County General Plan (2008)
- Middle Green Valley Specific Plan (2017)
- Suisun Valley Strategic Plan (2010)
- Solano County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2020)
- Solano County Congestion Management Plan (2023)
- Solano County Emergency Operations Plan (2022)
- City of Fairfield Emergency Operations Plan (2022)

1.5 Organization of the EIR

This Draft EIR is organized into the following chapters, plus appendices:

- ES. **Executive Summary.** Summarizes the EIR by providing an overview of the Proposed Project, the potentially significant environmental impacts that could result from the Proposed Project, the mitigation measures identified to reduce or avoid these impacts, alternatives to the Proposed Project, and identification of the environmentally superior Alternative.
1. **Introduction.** Introduces the purpose of the EIR, explains the EIR process and intended uses of the EIR, and describes the overall organization of this EIR.
2. **Project Description.** Describes in detail the Proposed Project, including its location and boundaries, purpose and objectives, and projected buildout.
3. **Environmental Analysis.** Analyzes the environmental impacts of the Proposed Project. Impacts are organized by major topic. Each topic area includes a description of the environmental setting, significance criteria, methodology, and potential impacts.
4. **Analysis of Alternatives.** Presents a reasonable range of alternatives to the Proposed Project, provides discussion of environmental impacts associated with each alternative, compares the relative impacts of each alternative to those of the Proposed Project and other alternatives, discusses the relationship of each alternative to the Proposed Project's objectives, and identifies the environmentally superior alternative.
5. **CEQA Required Conclusions.** Summarizes significant environmental impacts, including growth-inducing, cumulative, and significant and unavoidable impacts; significant irreversible environmental change; and impacts found not to be significant.
6. **List of Preparers.** Identifies the persons and organizations that contributed to the preparation of the EIR.
7. **Appendices.** Includes the NOP and compilation of agency and public comments received on the NOP, as well as other technical appendices including data used for environmental analysis in this EIR.