

Chapter 1
Introduction and Overview

Purpose of the EIR

The City of Lake Forest (City) has prepared this draft environmental impact report (EIR) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts related to development of a sports park and recreation center on approximately 90 gross acres in the northeastern portion of the City. The City is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the preparation of the EIR and will be taking primary responsibility for conducting the environmental review and certifying the EIR.

The EIR includes an analysis of the potentially significant environmental impacts that could occur as a result of implementation of the project and is meant to inform agencies and the public of significant environmental effects associated with the proposed project, to describe and evaluate reasonable alternatives to the project, and to propose mitigation measures that would avoid or reduce the project's significant effects.

CEQA Authority and Process

The preparation of an EIR is guided by a complex set of laws and guidelines. CEQA was enacted in 1970 by the California legislature to disclose to decision makers and the public the significant environmental effects of proposed activities and the ways to avoid or reduce those effects by requiring implementation of feasible alternatives or mitigation measures. CEQA applies to all California government agencies at all levels, including local government agencies that must issue permits or provide discretionary approvals for projects proposed by private applicants. As such, the City of Lake Forest is required to undertake the CEQA process before making a decision on the project.

The process and contents for the preparation of an EIR codified in the CEQA Statutes provided in California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq., and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.) provide guidance in the preparation of EIRs. Additionally, in 2009 the City of Lake Forest adopted the updated *Local Guidelines for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act*. The procedures were adopted to supplement the State CEQA Guidelines; they implement and tailor the general provisions of the State CEQA Guidelines to the specific operations of the City of Lake Forest. The purpose of these local guidelines is to help the City accomplish the following basic objectives of CEQA:

- (1) To enhance and provide long-term protection for the environment, while providing a decent home and satisfying living environment for every Californian.
- (2) To provide information to governmental decision-makers and the public regarding the potential significant environmental effects of the proposed project.
- (3) To provide an analysis of the environmental effects of future actions associated with the project to adequately apprise all interested parties of the true scope of the project for intelligent weighing of the environmental consequences of the project.

- (4) To identify ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced.
- (5) To prevent significant avoidable environmental damage through utilization of feasible project alternatives or mitigation measures.
- (6) To disclose and demonstrate to the public the reasons why a governmental agency approved the project in the manner chosen. Public participation is an essential part of the CEQA process. Each public agency should encourage wide public involvement, formal and informal, in order to receive and evaluate public reactions to environmental issues related to a public agency's activities. Such involvement should include, whenever possible, making environmental information available in electronic format on the Internet, on a web site maintained or utilized by the public agency.

The City of Lake Forest also published the City of Lake Forest CEQA Significance Thresholds Guide in November 2001, which was subsequently revised (most recently in March 2009). The City of Lake Forest CEQA Significance Thresholds Guide was prepared as an internal guidance document for City staff, to be used for the review of projects and in the preparation of environmental documents pursuant to CEQA. As defined in the State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15064.7), "A threshold of significance is an identifiable quantitative, qualitative or performance level of a particular environmental effect, non-compliance with which means the effect will normally be determined to be significant by the agency and compliance with which means the effect normally will be determined to be less than significant."

Section 15064(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines states that "The determination of whether a project may have a significant effect on the environment calls for careful judgment on the part of the public agency involved, based to the extent possible on scientific and factual data. An ironclad definition of significant effect is not always possible because the significance of an activity may vary with the setting." The City of Lake Forest CEQA Significance Thresholds Guide is a tool that compiles information that is useful in the preparation of environmental documents. The guide provides assistance in evaluating the significance of project impacts for six key topical issues in the City of Lake Forest: traffic, noise, air quality, land use, aesthetics, and water resources. These thresholds are applied in the EIR to the extent they are applicable to the proposed project. The CEQA process begins by determining whether the project is subject to environmental review. The approval of the proposed development meets the definition of a *project* under CEQA (State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15378). All projects within the State of California are required to undergo an environmental review in accordance with CEQA to determine the environmental impacts associated with implementation of a project. If it is determined that the project could result in significant environmental effects, then a *notice of preparation* (NOP) is circulated, and a *draft EIR* is then prepared. The *final EIR* is considered for certification by the City of Lake Forest City Council, following the public review and comment period. This EIR has been prepared pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines, the CEQA Statutes, and the City of Lake Forest *Local Guidelines for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act*.

Public and Agency Involvement

One of the primary objectives of CEQA is to enhance public participation in the process of planning a project. In addition to providing information and disclosing environmental impacts, the environmental review process provides several opportunities for the public to participate through scoping, public notice, public review of the CEQA document, and public hearings. Thus, public

involvement is considered an essential feature of CEQA, and community members are encouraged to participate in the environmental review process, request to be notified, monitor newspapers for formal announcements, and submit substantive comments at every possible opportunity afforded by the agency. Additionally, agencies are required to consider comments from the scoping process in the preparation of the draft EIR and respond to public comments in the final EIR.

Scope of Analysis

The draft EIR addresses the potential environmental effects of the proposed project and was prepared following input from the public, as well as responsible and affected agencies through the EIR scoping process. The scoping of the draft EIR was conducted using several of the tools available under CEQA.

In accordance with Section 15063 of the State CEQA Guidelines, an NOP was prepared and distributed to responsible and affected agencies and other interested parties for a 30-day public review. The public review period for the NOP began on June 3, 2009, and ended on July 6, 2009. The NOP was also posted in the Orange County Clerk's office for 30 days and sent to the State Clearinghouse at the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to solicit statewide agency participation in determining the scope of the EIR. A public scoping meeting was held on June 23, 2009, in Community Room A-B, at the City of Lake Forest City Hall, located at 25550 Commercentre Drive, Lake Forest, California.

The contents of this EIR were established based on the findings in the Initial Study and NOP and on public and agency input. A copy of the Initial Study and NOP, as well as comments received during the NOP review period, are included in Appendix A. The City determined that an EIR is required to address potentially significant environmental effects of the proposed project. The environmental areas identified as potentially significant include:

- aesthetics,
- air quality,
- biological resources,
- cultural resources,
- geology and soils,
- hazards and hazardous materials,
- hydrology and water quality,
- land use and planning,
- mineral resources,
- noise,
- paleontology,
- public services and utilities, and
- transportation/traffic.

Issues found during the scoping phase that would have less-than-significant impacts, or no impact, do not require further evaluation (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15128). Based on the initial study and NOP, the following environmental issues were found to have no impact or less-than-significant impacts and are not addressed further in this EIR:

- agricultural resources, and
- population and housing.

During the scoping phase, it was also determined that the proposed project would include the construction of recreational facilities that would have a potentially adverse impact on the environment. Potential adverse impacts associated with site preparation and construction of the proposed park and recreational facilities, including but not limited to grading and/or trenching, are analyzed and discussed in the pertinent resource sections of this EIR (e.g., biological resources, cultural resources, hazards and hazardous materials, air quality, noise, etc); therefore, a separate section for recreation is not included in this EIR. Operational impacts on aesthetic, noise, and transportation resources are also discussed in the pertinent resource sections of this draft EIR. Additionally, following the publishing of the NOP, the State CEQA Guidelines were amended (adopted by the Resources Agency in December 2009, to take effect in March 2010), which require analysis of greenhouse gas emissions as part of the CEQA process. Therefore, greenhouse gas emissions are also analyzed in this EIR.

Chapter 3 of this draft EIR is divided into chapters for each of the potentially significant issues listed above and includes a detailed discussion of the impacts.

Required EIR Contents

In addition to the environmental issues identified above, this EIR includes all of the sections required by CEQA. Table 1-1 contains a list of sections required under CEQA, along with a reference to the chapter in which they can be found.

Table 1-1. Required EIR Contents

Requirement (CEQA Section)	Location in EIR
Table of contents (Section 15122)	Table of Contents
Summary (Section 15123)	Executive Summary
Project description (Section 15124)	Chapter 2
Significant environmental impacts (Section 15126.2)	Chapters 3.1–3.14
Environmental setting (Section 15125)	Chapters 3.1–3.14
Mitigation measures (Section 15126.4)	Chapters 3.1–3.14
Cumulative impacts (Section 15130)	Chapter 4
Alternatives to the proposed project (Section 15126.6)	Chapter 5
Growth-inducing impacts (Section 15126.2)	Chapter 6
Effects found not to be significant (Section 15128)	Chapter 1, Chapters 3.1–3.14, Chapter 7
Significant irreversible changes	Chapter 7
Unavoidable significant environmental impacts (Section 15126.2)	Chapters 3.1–3.14, Chapter 7
List of preparers (Section 15129)	Chapter 8

Document Organization

The content and organization of this draft EIR are designed to meet the current requirements of CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines. The draft EIR is organized as described below:

Executive Summary presents a summary of the proposed project and alternatives, potential impacts and mitigation measures, and impact conclusions regarding growth inducement and cumulative impacts.

Chapter 1, Introduction, provides an overview of the EIR process, describes the purpose and scope of this draft EIR, and outlines required draft EIR contents and the organization of the draft EIR.

Chapter 2, Project Description, describes the project location, project details, and the City's objectives for the proposed project.

Chapter 3, Environmental Setting, Analysis, and Mitigation, describes the existing conditions for each environmental issue before project implementation, methods and assumptions used in the impact analysis, criteria for determining significance, impacts that would result from the proposed project, and applicable mitigation measures that would eliminate or reduce significant impacts. Chapter 3 is divided into Sections 3.1–3.14, each section focusing on a specific environmental resource topic.

Chapter 4, Cumulative Impacts, describes impacts that could occur from the combined effect of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects.

Chapter 5, Alternatives Analysis, evaluates the environmental effects of project alternatives, including the No-Project Alternative. It also identifies the environmentally superior project alternative.

Chapter 6, Growth-Inducing Impacts, includes a discussion of direct and indirect growth-inducing impacts that could be caused by the proposed project.

Chapter 7, Significant Unavoidable Impacts and Irreversible Changes, includes a discussion of significant adverse impacts that cannot be reduced to less-than-significant levels due to unavailable or infeasible mitigation measures, as well as irreversible commitments of resources caused by the project.

Chapter 8, List of Preparers, lists the individuals involved in preparing this draft EIR.

Technical Appendices provide information and technical studies that support the environmental analysis contained within this document.

