
7.0 – LONG TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT

This section discusses the additional topics statutorily required by CEQA. The topics discussed include significant irreversible environmental changes/irretrievable commitment of resources, significant and unavoidable environmental impacts, and growth-inducing impacts.

7.1 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluate the growth-inducing impacts of a proposed action. A growth-inducing impact is defined by the State CEQA Guidelines as:

The way in which a proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Included in this are projects which would remove obstacles to population growth...It is not assumed that growth in an area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.

A project can have direct and/or indirect growth inducement potential. Direct growth inducement would result if a project, for example, involved construction of new housing. A project would have indirect growth inducement potential if it established substantial new permanent employment opportunities (e.g., commercial, industrial, or governmental enterprises) or if it would involve a construction effort with substantial short-term employment opportunities that would indirectly stimulate the need for additional housing and services to support the new employment demand (*Napa Citizens for Honest Government v. Napa County Board of Supervisors*). Similarly, a project would indirectly induce growth if it would remove an obstacle to additional growth and development, such as removing a constraint on a required public service. A project providing an increased water supply in an area where water service historically limited growth could be considered growth-inducing.

The State CEQA Guidelines further explain that the environmental effects of induced growth are considered indirect impacts of the proposed action. These indirect impacts or secondary effects of growth may result in significant, adverse environmental impacts. Potential secondary effects of growth include increased demand on other community and public services and infrastructure, increased traffic and noise, and adverse environmental impacts such as degradation of air and water quality, degradation or loss of plant and animal habitat, and conversion of agricultural and open space land to developed uses.

Growth inducement may constitute an adverse impact if the growth is not consistent with or accommodated by the land use plans and growth management plans and policies for the area affected. Local land use plans provide for land use development patterns and growth policies that allow for the orderly expansion of urban development supported by adequate urban public services, such as water supply, roadway infrastructure, sewer service, and solid waste service.

COMPONENTS OF GROWTH

The timing, magnitude, and location of land development and population growth in a community are based on various interrelated land use and economic variables. Key variables include regional economic trends, market demand for residential and non-residential uses, land availability and cost, the availability and quality of transportation facilities and public services, proximity to employment centers, the supply and cost of housing, and regulatory policies or

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conditions. Since the general plan of a community defines the location, type, and intensity of growth, it is the primary means of regulating development and growth in California.

GROWTH EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

Based on Government Code Section 65300, the proposed General Plan Update is intended to serve as the overall plan for the physical development of the Town of Corte Madera. While the General Plan does not specifically propose any development projects, it does regulate future population and economic growth of the Town that would result in direct and indirect growth-inducing effects.

Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update would refine existing land use designations in the Town, establish new policy provisions, actions, and design guidelines that guide and manage future development and land uses in the Town. This would also include policy direction on limited roadway facility improvements, trail connections, public service improvements, and the expansion of utilities. The specific environmental effects resulting from the direct growth effects of proposed land use patterns and associated extension of public services by the year 2025 are discussed in Sections 4.1 through 4.12 of this DEIR. The following is a discussion of the growth-inducing effects of the project. The proposed General Plan Update would result in buildout of approximately 4,118 residential units and a population of 9,917 persons. The buildout for the General Plan Update is considered to occur by the year 2025.

Population Growth

As described in Section 4.2, Population/Housing/Employment, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) future growth projections for the Town of Corte Madera between the years 2005 and 2025 is 430 dwelling units and 1,210 jobs, for a projected jobs/housing balance of 1.84:1 in the year 2025. Implementation of the proposed General Plan has the capacity to generate approximately 8,650 jobs and 4,118 dwelling units at buildout with a resulting jobs/housing ratio of 2.1:1 by the year 2025. Thus, the General Plan is anticipated to worsen the jobs/housing balance conditions in the Town than is currently estimated by ABAG by providing fewer dwelling units, but additional jobs. The environmental effects of this growth are addressed in Sections 4.1 through 4.12 of this DEIR and below in this section.

Growth Effects Associated with Infrastructure Improvements

The proposed General Plan Update could indirectly induce growth if it would remove an obstacle to additional growth and development, such as removing a constraint on a required public service. The Town's infrastructure and public services are largely provided by other public and private service providers (e.g., Marin Municipal Water District for water supply, Central Marin Sanitation District for wastewater service, Pacific Gas & Electric for gas service and electrical service), which utilize master plans for guiding planned facility and service expansions that are subject to environmental review under CEQA.

The General Plan Update includes proposed roadway improvements that have been designed to support the General Plan Land Use Policy Map and to maintain the Town's proposed level of service (LOS) standard of LOS D where feasible and appropriate. The proposed General Plan does not include any provisions requiring the oversizing of infrastructure facilities to serve growth not anticipated in the General Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF GROWTH

As described above, the proposed General Plan Update is would induce further job growth in the City as well as potentially induce growth outside (i.e., growth displacement) of the Town in communities where housing is available. As a result, the proposed General Plan is considered to be growth-inducing. The environmental effects of growth within the Town of Corte Madera are addressed in Sections 4.1 through 4.12 of this DEIR, and the project's cumulative impacts are addressed in Section 5.0. The following additional environmental effects could be experienced due to growth in the region:

- Air Quality – Increases in air pollutant emissions potentially conflicting with air quality attainment efforts under state and federal Clean Air Acts, greenhouse gas emissions, and increased potential for the exposure to toxic air contaminants.
- Geology and Soils – Increased development in an area prone to seismic hazard, landslides, and ground failure.
- Hydrology and Water Quality – Increased development in an area prone to flooding.
- Noise – Increased transportation noise levels from increased traffic volumes.
- Population/Housing/Employment – Increase in employment in the Town of Corte Madera in excess of the increase of housing, resulting in a jobs/housing imbalance that could trigger displacement of growth to other areas resulting in land disturbance impacts and traffic impacts along the Highway 101 corridor (see Section 4.4, Transportation and Circulation, for anticipated impacts to the Highway 101 corridor).
- Public Services and Utilities – Increased demand for public services and utilities.
- Traffic – Increased traffic volumes on the region's highways and regional roadways resulting in deficient levels of service of operation.

7.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

CEQA Guidelines Sections 21100(b)(2) and 21100.1(a) require that EIRs prepared for the adoption of a plan, policy, or ordinance of a public agency must include a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes of project implementation. In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c) describes irreversible environmental changes as:

Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

Implementation of the proposed Corte Madera General Plan Update could result in the conversion of undeveloped and/or underutilized residential zoned properties to residential, commercial, office, public, and recreational uses. Subsequent development under the General Plan Update would constitute a long-term commitment to these uses. It is unlikely that circumstances would arise that would justify the return of the land to its original condition.

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Development of the Town would irretrievably commit building materials and energy to the construction and maintenance of buildings and infrastructure. Renewable, nonrenewable, and limited resources that would likely be consumed as part of the development of the proposed project would include, but are not limited to, oil, gasoline, lumber, sand and gravel, asphalt, water, steel, and similar materials. In addition, development of the project would result in the increased demand on public services and utilities (see Section 4.11, Public Services and Utilities). The project would also result in significant unavoidable effects related to air emissions, including emissions of greenhouse gases (see Section 4.5, Air Quality).

7.3 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(b) requires an EIR to discuss unavoidable significant environmental effects, including those that can be mitigated but not reduced to a level of insignificance. In addition, Section 15093(a) of the CEQA Guidelines allows the decision-making agency to determine whether the benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental impacts of implementing the project. The Town can approve a project with unavoidable adverse impacts if it prepares a "Statement of Overriding Considerations" setting forth the specific reasons for making such a judgment.

The following significant and unavoidable impacts (project and cumulative) of the proposed General Plan are specifically identified in Sections 4.1 through 4.12 and Section 5.0 of this EIR. The reader is referred to the various environmental issue areas of these sections for further details and analysis of the significant and unavoidable impacts identified below.

SECTION 4.2 POPULATION/HOUSING/EMPLOYMENT

Jobs/Housing Balance

Impact 4.2.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update could result in housing impacts by creating an imbalance between employment and housing. This is a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

SECTION 4.4 TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

Cumulative Traffic Impacts on Freeway Operations

Impact 4.4.6 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update would result in increased motor vehicle traffic, which would contribute to an unacceptable level of service (LOS) on Highway 101. This impact is considered **cumulatively considerable** and **significant and unavoidable**.

SECTION 4.5 AIR QUALITY

Potential Increase in Long-Term Atmospheric Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Impact 4.5.5 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update would contribute to an increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from vehicle transportation, building energy use and may contribute to increases in atmospheric GHG concentrations. Higher concentrations of GHGs have been linked to the phenomenon of climate change. This impact is considered **cumulatively considerable** and a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

Regional Air Plan Impacts

Impact 4.5.6 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would exacerbate existing regional problems with ozone and particulate matter and could conflict with BAAQMD air quality improvement efforts (e.g., Clean Air Plan, BAAQMD thresholds). This would be a **cumulatively considerable** and **significant and unavoidable** regional air quality impact.

SECTION 4.6 NOISE

Traffic Noise Increase Impacts

Impact 4.6.1 Buildout of the General Plan may contribute to an exceedance of the Town's noise standards from projected increases in traffic volumes, resulting in potential noise impacts to sensitive receptors. This is considered a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

Cumulative Traffic Noise Conflicts

Impact 4.6.4 Implementation of the proposed General Plan along with potential development of the Planning Area could result in increased traffic noise conflicts. This impact would be considered **cumulatively considerable** and **significant and unavoidable**.

SECTION 4.11.4 WATER SUPPLY AND SERVICE

Increased Water Demand

Impact 4.11.4.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update could increase demand for water supply to the Town. This is considered a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

Cumulative Effects of Increased Water Demand

Impact 4.11.4.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update along with growth in the MMWD service area would result in cumulative water supply impacts. This impact would be **cumulatively considerable** and **significant and unavoidable**.