

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

This chapter consists of 13 sections that evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposed Downtown Station Area Specific Plan. In accordance with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, the potential environmental effects of the proposed Specific Plan are analyzed for the following environmental issue areas:

- ◆ Aesthetics
- ◆ Air Quality
- ◆ Biological Resources
- ◆ Cultural Resources
- ◆ Geology and Soils (includes Mineral Resources)
- ◆ Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- ◆ Hydrology and Water Quality
- ◆ Land Use (includes Agricultural Resources)
- ◆ Noise
- ◆ Population and Housing
- ◆ Public Services and Recreation
- ◆ Transportation and Circulation
- ◆ Utilities and Infrastructure

A. *Format of the Environmental Evaluation*

Each section in Chapter 4.0 generally follows the same format and consists of the following subsections:

- ◆ The *Regulatory Framework* subsection contains an overview of the federal, State and local laws and regulations applicable to each environmental review topic.
- ◆ The *Existing Conditions* subsection describes current conditions with regard to the environmental factor reviewed.
- ◆ The *Standards of Significance* subsection tells how an impact is judged to be significant in this EIR. These standards are based on the CEQA Guidelines and other regulatory criteria where noted.

- ◆ The *Impact Discussion* gives an overview of potential impacts of the Specific Plan and tells why impacts were found to be significant or less than significant. This section includes a discussion of cumulative impacts of the proposed project.
- ◆ The *Impacts and Mitigation Measures* section numbers and lists identified impacts and identifies measures that would mitigate each impact, where such measures are available.

In Sections 4.1 through 4.13, each numbered impact is considered significant prior to mitigation. Mitigation measures have been suggested that would reduce significant impacts to less than significant levels. Following identified mitigation measures, there is a statement whether the mitigation would reduce the impact to less than significant, or whether it would remain significant and unavoidable.

B. Cumulative Impact Analysis

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines requires an EIR to discuss cumulative impacts of a project when the project's incremental effect is cumulatively considerable. A cumulative impact consists of an impact created as a result of the combination of the project evaluated in the EIR together with other reasonably foreseeable projects causing related impacts.

In the case of an area-wide planning document such as a Specific Plan, cumulative effects occur from development under the Plan within the city combined with effects of development in other portions of the city and region. By definition, no development within the Specific Plan Area would be considered part of the cumulative impacts; instead, development inside the Specific Plan Area is part of the project itself.

Where the incremental effect of a project is not "cumulatively considerable," a lead agency need not consider that effect significant, but must briefly de-

scribe its basis for concluding that the incremental effect is not cumulatively considerable.

The cumulative impacts analyses in Sections 4.1 to 4.13 are included in the Impact Discussion in each section.

1. Geographic Area for Cumulative Analysis

Individual cumulative impacts may occur over different geographic areas. The cumulative discussions in Sections 4.1 through 4.13 explain the geographic scope of the area affected by each cumulative effect (e.g. watershed or air basin). The geographic area considered for each cumulative impact depends upon the impact that is being analyzed. For example, in assessing air quality impacts, all development within the air basin contributes to regional emissions of criteria pollutants, and basinwide projections of emissions is the best tool for determining the cumulative effect. For most resource issues, the cumulative context evaluated in this EIR is the City of Santa Rosa and its Urban Growth Boundary.

2. Cumulative Projects Considered

The CEQA Guidelines provide two approaches to analyzing cumulative impacts. The first is the “list approach,” which requires a listing of past, present, and reasonably anticipated future projects producing related or cumulative impacts. The second is the summary approach wherein the relevant projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document that is designed to evaluate regional or area wide conditions are summarized. A reasonable combination of the two approaches may also be used.

The cumulative impacts of a Specific Plan take into account growth projected by the Specific Plan for the Specific Plan Area, in combination with impacts from projected growth in the rest of Santa Rosa and the City’s Urban Growth Boundary. In each of the following 13 sections, the cumulative impact analysis examines cumulative effects of the proposed Specific Plan, in combination with City of Santa Rosa-projected growth for the city and Urban Growth Boundary.

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
DOWNTOWN STATION AREA SPECIFIC PLAN EIR
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According to the Santa Rosa 2020: General Plan, the population within the City of Santa Rosa and its Urban Growth Boundary is expected to reach a total of 195,300 by year 2020. By this same time approximately 19,300 housing units are also projected.

For the purposes of this cumulative analysis, a city-level cumulative analysis is used for the impact analyses. The potential cumulative effects of the proposed Specific Plan are summarized in each of the following 13 sections.