
I. INTRODUCTION

A. INTRODUCTION

The subject of this Draft Environmental Impact Report (“EIR” or “Draft EIR”) is the proposed Stonegate Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map and General Plan Amendment / Rezone (State Clearinghouse No. 2016062049) (“proposed project”). City of Chico Community Development Department (“City”) is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) Cal. Public Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.). The City of Chico Community Development Department Planning Division administers the process by which environmental documents for private projects are prepared and reviewed. On the basis of these procedures, it was determined that the proposed project may have a significant effect on the environment, and that an EIR should be prepared.

This Draft EIR meets legal requirements of CEQA and discloses environmental information concerning the proposed projects and invites all interested parties to comment on that information and the proposed projects. This Draft EIR also provides state, federal and local decision makers with detailed information concerning potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed projects and project alternatives.

B. PURPOSE OF THE EIR

The City of Chico has commissioned this Draft EIR for the proposed project for the following purposes:

- To satisfy CEQA requirements.
- To inform the general public; the local community; and responsible, trustee, and state and federal agencies of the nature of the proposed project, its potentially significant environmental effects, feasible mitigation measures to mitigate those effects, and its reasonable and feasible alternatives.
- To enable the City to consider the environmental consequences of approving the proposed project.
- For consideration by responsible agencies in issuing permits and approvals for the proposed project.

As described in CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, public agencies are charged with the duty to avoid or substantially lessen significant environmental impacts, where feasible. In discharging this duty, a public agency has an obligation to balance the project’s significant impacts on the environment with other conditions, 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 impacts of the proposed project on the environment and to indicate the

manner in which those significant impacts can be avoided or significantly 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 impacts 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 decision on the proposed project. Although the EIR does not determine the ultimate decision that will be made regarding implementation of the project, CEQA requires the City of Chico to consider the information in the EIR and make findings regarding each significant effect in the EIR.

This Draft EIR was prepared in accordance with Section 15151 of the CEQA Guidelines which defines the standards for EIR adequacy:

An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in the light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR would summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The courts have looked not for perfection; but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure.

C. PROPOSED PROJECT

The applicant for the proposed project is Epick Homes (“Applicant”). Its office is located at 901 Bruce Road, Suite 100, Chico, California 95928. As described in more detail in Section III (Project Description), the proposed project involves a subdivision of the 313-acre project site (“project site”) into combination of open space, public right-of-way, park, single-family residential standard lots, single-family residential half-acre lots, multi-family residential, and commercial uses. The proposed project also includes zone changes and General Plan Amendments to establish Primary Open Space and to reconfigure the Residential and Commercial designations throughout the site.

D. LEAD AGENCY DETERMINATION

The City of Chico is designated as the lead agency for the project. CEQA Guidelines Section 15367 defines the lead agency as “. . . the public agency, which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project.” Other public agencies may use this Draft EIR in the decision-making or permit process and consider the information in this Draft EIR along with other information that may be presented during the CEQA process.

This Draft EIR was prepared by WRA Inc., an environmental consultant. Prior to public review, it was extensively reviewed and evaluated by the City of Chico. This Draft EIR reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the City of Chico as required by CEQA. Lists of

organizations and persons consulted and the report preparation personnel are provided in Section VIII (Preparers of the EIR and Persons Contacted) of this Draft EIR.

E. EIR REVIEW PROCESS

Notice of Preparation

Upon review of the application for the proposed project, the City of Chico determined that the project has the potential to result in potentially significant environmental impacts and therefore an EIR should be prepared. In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the City prepared a Notice of Preparation (“NOP”) for this Draft EIR (Appendix A). The NOP was circulated on June 20, 2016, to local, State and Federal agencies, and nearby property owners until July 21, 2016 for the statutory 30-day public review period. The NOP provided a general description of the proposed project and a summary of the main regulations and permit conditions applicable to the development and operation of the proposed project. Additionally, an NOP scoping meeting was held on July 12, 2016 at the City of Chico City Council Chambers. The scope of this Draft EIR includes the potential environmental impacts identified in the NOP and issues raised by agencies and the public in response to the NOP. The NOP is contained in Appendix A of this Draft EIR. Commenters are listed in Table I-1 and comment letters provided in Appendix B of this Draft EIR.

Table I-1 NOP Comment Letters

Status	Affiliation	Signatory
Public Agencies	Butte County Department of Public Works	Thomas A. Fossum, P.E., Deputy Director
	Butte County Air Quality Management District	Jason Mandly, Associate Air Quality Planner
	Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board Storm Water & Water Quality Certification Unit	Scott A. Zaitz, R.E.H.S
	California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), North Central Region/Region 2	Tina Bartlett, Regional Manager
	California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 3	Susan Zanchi, Branch Chief
	Chico Unified School District	Julie Kistle
Private Parties	AquAlliance	Barbara Vlamis, Executive Director
	Butte Environmental Council	Natalie Carter, Executive Director
	Parkhurst Neighborhood Association	John White
	Chico Velo Cycling Club	Janine Rood, Executive Director
	North States Vernal Pool Landscapes and Recovery Plan Implementation Group	Barbara Castro, Robert Schlising, and Barbara Vlamis
	Bungalow	Christopher Michaels
Vernal Pool Recovery Plan Implementation	Barbara Castro	

Status	Affiliation	Signatory
	Working Group	
	Aqu Alliance	Norm Todenhagen
	Private Individuals	William & Carol Jemison
	Private Individual	Ken D'Arezzo
	Private Individuals	Brad Chester & Michele Contestable
	Private Individual	Connie Adams
	Private Individuals	Joe and Jessica Giannola
	Private Individual	Laurinda Corron
	Private Individuals	Paul and Kathy Coots
	Private Individual	Michael Genga
	Private Individual	Carolyn Hana
	Private Individual	Lydia & Agurkis
	Private Individual	Larry Levin
	Private Individual	Russ Thayne
	Private Individual	Jim Matthews
	Private Individuals	Louis & Stephanie Brooner
	Private Individual	William M. Jemison
	Private Individual	Brent McCarthy
	Private Individuals	Brad & Michele Chester
	Private Individual	Gary Daughetry
	Private Individual	Kathleen Faith
	Friends of Butte Creek	Patty Moriarty
	Private Individual	Lydia Agurkis
	Private Individual	Marcia L. Tarabin

Status	Affiliation	Signatory
	Private Individual	Melanie Kendrick
	Private Individual	James Brobeck
	Private Individual	Jim Matthews
	Private Individual	Sherry Staser
	Private Individual	Elizabeth Devereaux
	Private Individual	Marion Larsen
	Private Individual	Caroline Burkett
	Private Individual	Barbara O'Brien
	Private Individual	Joe Giannola
	Private Individual	Jacob Sams
	Private Individual	Paul Coots
Source: City of Chico, 2016		

Environmental Issues to Be Analyzed In Draft EIR

Pursuant to Section 15063 of the CEQA Guidelines, an Initial Study was prepared for the proposed project which concluded that the project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts and that an EIR would be required (Appendix A). The Initial Study also identified which environmental impact topics required detailed analysis in the Draft EIR. Based upon the conclusions of the Initial Study, the following environmental impact topics are analyzed in detail in the Draft EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

Refer to Section IV.A (Impacts Found to be Less Than Significant) for a discussion why other environmental impact topics are not analyzed in detail in the Draft EIR

Environmental Review Process

The Draft EIR will be circulated for review by the public and other interested parties, agencies, and organizations for 45 days. Comments of the adequacy of the Draft EIR will be accepted during this 45-day period. All comments or questions about the Draft EIR should be addressed to:

City of Chico
Community Development Department
Attn: Mike Sawley, AICP, Senior Planner
411 Main Street, 2nd Floor
Post Office Box 3420
Chico, CA 95928
mike.sawley@Chicoca.gov

Final EIR and Project Approvals

Following the close of the 45-day public and agency comment period, responses to all substantive comments on the Draft EIR will be prepared for publication in the Final EIR. The Final EIR will be prepared as a separate document from the Draft EIR, and will be considered by City of Chico Planning Commission and City Council at public hearings and certified by the City Council if it is determined to comply with CEQA. The Final EIR will be available for public review prior to the City of Chico's consideration of certifying the Final EIR.

Section 15204(a) (Focus of Review) of the CEQA Guidelines helps the public and agencies to focus their review of environmental documents and their comments to lead agencies. Case law has held that the lead agency is not obligated to undertake every suggestion given them, provided that the agency responds to significant environmental issues and makes a good faith effort at disclosure. Section 15204.5(a) of the CEQA Guidelines clarifies this for reviewers by stating:

In reviewing draft EIRs, persons and public agencies should focus 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 or mitigated. Comments are most helpful when they suggest additional specific alternatives or mitigation measures that would provide better ways to avoid or mitigate the significant environmental effects. At the same time, reviewers should be aware that the adequacy of an EIR is determined in terms of what is reasonably feasible, in light of factors such as the magnitude of the project at issue, the severity of its likely environmental impacts, and the geographic scope of the project. CEQA does not require a lead agency to conduct every test or perform all research, study, and experimentation recommended or demanded by commenters. When responding to comments, lead agencies need only respond to significant environmental issues and do not need to provide all information requested by reviewers, as long as a good faith effort at full disclosure is made in the EIR.

This guideline encourages reviewers to examine the sufficiency of the environmental document, particularly in regard to significant effects, and to suggest specific mitigation measures and project alternatives. Given that an effect is not considered significant in the absence of substantial evidence, subsection (c) advises reviewers that comments should be accompanied by factual support. Section 15204(c) states:

Reviewers should explain the basis for their comments, and, should submit data or references offering facts, reasonable assumptions based on facts, or expert opinion supported by facts in support of the comments. Pursuant to Section 15064, an effect shall not be considered significant in the absence of substantial evidence.

CEQA Findings and Mitigation Monitoring

CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines require lead agencies to “adopt a reporting and mitigation monitoring program for the changes to the project which it has adopted or made a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment” (CEQA Guidelines Article 7, Sections 15091(d) and 15097). Proposed mitigation measures have been identified in the Initial Study and Draft EIR, presented in language that will facilitate establishment of a monitoring program. The monitoring program must be designed to ensure compliance during project implementation. The Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (“MMRP”) for the project will be prepared as part of the Final EIR.

F. LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANCE

This EIR uses a variety of terms to describe the levels of significance of adverse impacts identified during the course of the environmental analysis. The following are definitions of terms that may be used in this EIR:

- **Less-than-significant impact:** Impacts that are adverse, but that do not exceed the specified standards of significance.
- **Less-than-significant impact with mitigation:** Impacts that exceed the defined standards of significance and that can be eliminated or reduced to a less-than-significant level through the implementation of feasible mitigation measures.
- **Significant and unavoidable impact:** Impacts that exceed the defined standards of significance and cannot be eliminated or reduced to a less-than-significant level through the implementation of feasible mitigation measures.

G. ORGANIZATION OF THE DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR is organized into the following main sections:

- Section I-Introduction: This section provides an introduction and overview describing the purpose of the Draft, its scope and components, and its review and certification process.
- Section II-Executive Summary: This section includes a summary of the proposed project and alternatives to be addressed in the Draft EIR. A brief description of the areas of controversy and issues to be resolved, and overview of the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, in addition to a table that summarizes the impacts, mitigation measures, and level of significance after mitigation, are also included in this section.
- Section III-Project Description: This section includes a detailed description of the proposed project, including its location, site, and project characteristics. A discussion of the project objectives, intended uses of the Draft EIR, responsible agencies, and approvals that are needed for the proposed project are also provided.
- Section IV-Environmental Impact Analysis: This section analyzes the environmental impacts of the proposed project. Impacts are organized into major topic areas. Each topic area includes a description of the environmental setting, methodology, significance criteria, impacts, mitigation measures, and significance after mitigation. The specific environmental topics that are addressed within Section 3 are as follows:
 - Section IV.A-Impacts Found to be Less than Significant: This section contains analysis of the topical sections not addressed further in Section IV.
 - Section IV.B- Aesthetics: Addresses the potential visual impacts of development intensification and the overall increase in illumination produced by the project.
 - Section IV.C- Air Quality: Addresses the potential air quality impacts associated with project implementation, as well as consistency with the Butte County Air Quality Management District 2014 CEQA Air Quality Handbook.
 - Section IV.D- Biological Resources: Addresses the project's potential impacts on habitat, vegetation, and wildlife; the potential degradation or elimination of important habitat; and impacts on listed, proposed, and candidate threatened and endangered species.
 - Section IV.E-Cultural Resources: Addresses potential impacts on historical resources, archaeological resources, paleontological resources, and burial sites.
 - Section IV.F-Geology and Soils: Addresses the potential impacts the project may have on soils and assesses the effects of project development in relation to geologic and seismic conditions.

- Section IV.G- Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Addresses the emissions of greenhouse gases related to the proposed project.
 - Section IV.H-Hazards and Hazardous Materials: Addresses the potential for the presence of hazardous materials or conditions on the project site and in the project area that may have the potential to impact human health.
 - Section IV.I- Hydrology and Water Quality: Addresses the potential impacts of the project on local hydrological conditions, including drainage areas, and changes in the flow rates.
 - Section IV.J-Land Use and Planning: Addresses the potential land use impacts associated with consistency with the Chico 2020 General Plan and the Chico Municipal Code.
 - Section IV.K-Noise: Addresses the potential noise impacts during construction and at project buildout from mobile and stationary sources. The section also addresses the impact of noise generation on neighboring uses.
 - Section IV.L-Population and Housing: Addresses the potential impacts related to the potential increase in population and housing availability as a result of the proposed project.
 - Section IV.M-Public Services: Addresses the potential impacts associated with the project regarding demand for public services.
 - Section IV.N-Recreation: Addresses the potential impacts associated with the recreational facilities within the City of Chico.
 - Section IV.O-Transportation and Traffic: Addresses the impacts on the local and regional roadway system, public transportation, bicycle, and pedestrian access.
 - IV.P-Utilities and Service Systems: Addresses the potential impacts associated with the project regarding utilities and service systems
 - IV.Q-Tribal Cultural Resources: Addresses the impacts on the local tribal cultural resources resulting from the proposed project.
- Section V-Cumulative Effects: This section discusses the cumulative impacts associated with the proposed project, including the impacts associated with the build-out of the 2030 Chico General Plan.
 - Section VI- General Impact Categories: This section provides a summary of significant and unavoidable impacts associated with the proposed project, a discussion of the potential growth inducement of the proposed project, and a discussion of potential significant irreversible environmental changes associated with the proposed project.

- Section VII-Alternatives to the Proposed Project: This section compares the impacts of the proposed project with two land-use project alternatives: Alternative A. No Project and Alternative B. Elimination of RS-20 lots. An environmentally superior alternative is identified. In addition, alternatives initially considered but rejected from further consideration are discussed.
- Section VIII- Preparers of the EIR and Persons Consulted: This section also contains a full list of persons and organizations that were consulted during the preparation of this Draft EIR. This section also contains a full list of the authors who assisted in the preparation of the Draft EIR, by name and affiliation.
- Section IX-References: This section contains a full list of references that were used in the preparation of this Draft EIR.
- Appendices: This section includes all notices and other procedural documents pertinent to the Draft EIR, as well as all technical material prepared to support the analysis.

H. DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

As permitted by CEQA Guidelines Section 15150, this Draft EIR has referenced several technical studies, analyses, and previously certified environmental documentation. Information from the documents, which have been incorporated by reference, has been briefly summarized in the appropriate section(s). The relationship between the incorporated part of the referenced document and the Draft EIR has also been described. The documents and other sources that have been used in the preparation of this Draft EIR include but are not limited to:

- Chico 2030 General Plan
- Chico Municipal Code
- City of Chico Design Guidelines Manual
- California Water Service Company 2010 Urban Water Management Plan
- Butte County Air Quality Management District 2014 CEQA Air Quality Handbook
- Public Review Draft Butte County Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan

These documents are specifically identified in Section IX. (References), of this Draft EIR. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15150(b), the General Plan, the Municipal Code, and the referenced documents and other sources used in the preparation of the Draft EIR are available for review at the City of Chico offices at the address shown in Section IX. (References).

I. DOCUMENTS PREPARED FOR THE PROJECT

The following technical studies and analyses were prepared for the proposed project:

- Air Quality/ GHG CalEEMod Report, Prepared by Illingworth and Rodkin (Appendix C).
- Biological Resources Assessment, prepared by WRA Inc. (Appendix D).
- Wetland Delineation Report, prepared by WRA Inc. (Appendix D).
- Rare Plant Survey and Mapping, prepared by WRA Inc. (Appendix D).
- Cultural Resources Report, prepared by Far Western (Appendix E).
- Water Supply Assessment, prepared by Cal Water (Appendix F).
- Noise Analysis, prepared by Bollard Acoustical Consultants, Inc. (Appendix G).
- Transportation Assessment prepared by Fehr & Peers (Appendix H)

J. REVIEW OF DRAFT EIR

Upon completion of the Draft EIR, the City of Chico filed a Notice of Completion (“NOC”) with the State Office of Planning and Research to begin the public review period (Public Resources Code, Section 21161). Concurrent with the NOC, a Notice of Availability of this Draft EIR has been distributed to responsible and trustee agencies, other affected agencies, surrounding cities, and interested parties, as well as all parties requesting a copy of the Draft EIR in accordance with Public Resources Code 21092(b)(3). During the public review period, the Draft EIR, including the technical appendices, is available for review at the City of Chico Community Development Department and the Butte County Library Chico Branch. The address for each location is provided below:

City of Chico
Community Development Department
411 Main Street, 2nd Floor
Chico, CA 95927
Hours: Monday–Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Butte County Library, Chico Branch
1108 Sherman Avenue Chico, CA 95926
Hours: Tuesday: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Wednesday and Thursday: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Friday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sunday: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The Draft EIR is also available electronically on the City of Chico’s website:
http://www.chico.ca.us/planning_services/Stonegate_000.asp

Agencies, organizations, and interested parties have the opportunity to comment on the Draft EIR during the 45-day public review period. Written comments on this Draft EIR should be addressed to:

Mr. Mike Sawley, Senior Planner
City of Chico
Community Development Department
411 Main Street, 2nd Floor
P.O. Box 3420
Chico, CA 95927
Phone: 530.879.6800
Fax: 530.895.4726
Email: mike.sawley@chicoca.gov

Submittal of electronic comments in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format is encouraged. Upon completion of the public review period, written responses to all significant environmental issues raised will be prepared and made available for review by the commenting agencies at least 10 days prior to the public hearing before the Chico Planning Commission on the project, at which the certification of the Final EIR will be considered. Comments received and the responses to comments will be included as part of the record for consideration by decision makers for the project.