



SECTION 2.0

Introduction and Purpose



2.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

2.1 AUTHORITY

The City of Santa Clarita (City) is the Lead Agency under the *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)*, and is responsible for preparing the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Mancara at Robinson Ranch Project (State Clearinghouse No. 2006041029). This EIR has been prepared in conformance with *CEQA* (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.), *CEQA Guidelines* (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.), and the City of Santa Clarita *Local Guidelines and Procedures for Implementation of the Provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (Local Guidelines)*. The principal *CEQA Guidelines* sections governing content of this document are Sections 15120 through 15132 (*Content of an EIR*), and Section 15161 (*Project EIR*).

The purpose of this EIR is to review the existing conditions, analyze potential environmental impacts, and identify feasible mitigation measures to avoid or lessen potentially significant effects of Mancara at Robinson Ranch (proposed project). The overall objective of the proposed project is to develop a gated equestrian community with 99 single-family lots on 187.3 acres of primarily undeveloped land. For more detailed information regarding the proposed project, refer to Section 3.0, Project Description.

In accordance with *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15121, the main purposes of this EIR are to:

- Provide decision-makers and the public with specific information regarding the environmental effects associated with the proposed project.
- Identify ways to minimize the significant effects of the project.
- Describe reasonable alternatives to the project.

Mitigation measures are provided that will be adopted as conditions of approval to avoid or minimize the significance of impacts resulting from the project. In addition, this EIR is the primary reference document in the formulation and implementation of a mitigation monitoring program for the proposed project.

2.2 INTENDED USES OF THIS EIR

The City of Santa Clarita, which has the principal responsibility of processing and approving the project, and other public agencies (i.e., Responsible and Trustee Agencies) that may use this EIR in the decision-making or permit process will consider the information in this EIR, along with other information that may be presented during the *CEQA* process. Environmental impacts are not always mitigable to a level considered less than significant; in those cases, impacts are considered significant unavoidable impacts. In accordance with *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15093(b), if a public agency approves a project that has significant impacts that are not substantially mitigated (i.e., significant unavoidable impacts), the agency shall state in writing the specific reasons for approving the project, based on the Final EIR and any other information in the public record for the project. This is termed a “statement of overriding considerations” per *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15093(b).



This document analyzes the environmental effects of the project to the degree of specificity appropriate to the current proposed actions, as required by *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15146. This analysis considers the actions associated with the project to determine the short-term and long-term effects associated with their implementation. This EIR discusses both the direct and indirect impacts of this project, as well as the cumulative impacts associated with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. *CEQA* requires the preparation of an objective, full disclosure document to inform agency decision-makers and the public of the direct and indirect environmental effects of the proposed action, provide mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate significant adverse effects, and identify and evaluate reasonable alternatives to the proposed project.

2.3 COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA

2.3.1 EIR SCOPING PROCESS

In compliance with *CEQA* and the *CEQA Guidelines*, the City has taken steps to maximize opportunities to participate in the environmental process. During the preparation of the Draft EIR, an effort was made to contact various Federal, State, regional, and local government agencies and other interested parties to solicit comments and inform the public of the proposed project. This included the distribution of an Initial Study and Notice of Preparation (NOP).

In accordance with *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15063(a), as amended, the City undertook the preparation of an Initial Study. The Initial Study determined that a number of environmental issue areas may be impacted by implementation of the Mancara at Robinson Ranch Project. As a result, the Initial Study determined that this Draft EIR should address the project's significant impacts on a variety of environmental issue areas.

The EIR focuses primarily on changes in the environment that would result from the proposed project. The EIR identifies potential impacts resulting from the construction and operation of the proposed project and provides measures to mitigate potential significant impacts. Those impacts that cannot be mitigated to levels less than significant are also identified. This EIR addresses impacts in the following areas:

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|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| ◆ Aesthetics, Light, and Glare | ◆ Police Protection |
| ◆ Biological Resources | ◆ Schools/Education |
| ◆ Traffic and Circulation | ◆ Parks and Recreation |
| ◆ Air Quality | ◆ Solid Waste |
| ◆ Greenhouse Gas Emissions | ◆ Water Supply |
| ◆ Noise | ◆ Wastewater |
| ◆ Hydrology and Water Quality | ◆ Electricity |
| ◆ Geology, Soils, and Seismicity | ◆ Natural Gas |
| ◆ Fire Protection | ◆ |



Based on the Initial Study, issues for which no significant impacts are anticipated to occur as a result of development of the proposed project are addressed in Section 9.0, Effects Found Not To Be Significant including agricultural resources, cultural resources, hazards and hazardous materials, land use and planning, and mineral resources.

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

The purpose of a Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to formally convey that the City, as the CEQA Lead Agency, is preparing a Draft EIR for a project and is soliciting input regarding the scope and content of the EIR. When an Initial Study is prepared, it is circulated to public agencies, special districts, and members of the public for comments with the NOP. The NOP and Initial Study are provided as Appendix A of this EIR.

Pursuant to the provision of *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15082, as amended, the City circulated an NOP for a 30-day public review period commencing April 5, 2006 through May 4, 2006.

NOP AND SCOPING RESULTS

During the NOP circulation period, the City of Santa Clarita advertised a public scoping meeting. The meeting was held on April 26, 2006 at City Hall, located at 23920 Valencia Boulevard in Santa Clarita. The meeting was held with the specific intent of affording interested individuals/groups and public agencies a forum in which to orally present input directly to the Lead Agency in an effort to assist in further refining the intended scope and focus of the EIR as described in the NOP and Initial Study.

The NOP/Initial Study was distributed for 30 days to various public agencies and organizations in order to receive input as to the scope and content of the environmental information to be provided in this EIR. Comments from the following agencies, organizations, and individuals were received both during and after the close of the 30-day public review period:

- Castaic Lake Water Agency
- County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
- South Coast Air Quality Management District
- State of California, Department of Transportation, District 7
- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
- Southern California Association of Governments
- State of California, Department of California Highway Patrol
- Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- Metrolink, Southern California Regional Rail Authority
- State of California, Department of Fish and Game
- State of California, Public Utilities Commission
- County of Los Angeles, Sheriff's Department
- Friends of the Santa Clara River



- County of Los Angeles, Fire Department
- Santa Clarita Organization for Planning and the Environment
- Sand Canyon Homeowners Association
- Sharon and Gerard Verity
- William Corbett
- Lisa Kauppi
- Richard Lerma
- Richard Cunningham
- Carol Hill
- Jeff and Debi Beebe

The following specific environmental concerns were raised in response to the NOP (the numerical reference in parenthesis is the EIR section in which the analysis is provided). The NOP comments are contained in Appendix B of this EIR:

- Encouraged use of low-water-use landscaping devices for landscaping and irrigation. (refer to Section 5.14, Water Supply)
- Compliance with County of Los Angeles Fire Department requirements (refer to Section 5.9, Fire Protection)
- Compliance with County of Los Angeles Sheriff's Department requirements (refer to Section 5.10, Police Protection)
- Potential air quality impacts associated with all phases of proposed project (refer to Section 5.4, Air Quality)
- Impacts to the County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County (Districts) as a result of an increase in wastewater (refer to Section 5.15, Wastewater)
- Loss of groundwater recharge areas along the Santa Clara River, which may impact water quality (refer to Section 5.7, Hydrology and Water Quality)
- Impacts to flora, fauna, wildlife corridors, and oak trees due to continued encroachment by development both on-site and into the Santa Clara River floodplain and the Los Angeles County Significant Ecological Area (SEA) 23 (Santa Clara River) (refer to Section 5.2, Biological Resources)
- Effects of the filling and channelization of the Santa Clara River, resulting in the alteration of the hydrology of the watershed, increasing storm runoff, and decreasing water quality (refer to Section 5.7, Hydrology and Water Quality)
- Increased traffic volumes on surrounding roadways including Lost Canyon Road, and State Route 14 (refer to Section 5.3, Traffic and Circulation)



- Site ingress/egress locations (refer to Section 5.3, Traffic and Circulation)
- Drainage and flooding problems along Lost Canyon Road and to the Metrolink Railroad Right-of-Way (refer to Section 5.7, Hydrology and Water Quality)
- Location of the proposed multi-use trail on-site and along Lost Canyon Road (refer to Section 5.12, Parks and Recreation)
- Adequacy of water supply (refer to Section 5.14, Water Supply)

2.3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS FOR THE DRAFT EIR

The review process for the Draft EIR will include the procedural steps described below.

Public Notice/Public Review. The City of Santa Clarita Community Development Department directed and supervised preparation of the Draft EIR, which will be circulated for a 45-day public review period as mandated by *CEQA*.

On file at the City of Santa Clarita Community Development Department is a copy of the Draft EIR and all adopted City ordinances and documents. All comments concerning the adequacy of the Draft EIR must be addressed to:

City of Santa Clarita
23920 Valencia Boulevard, Suite 300
Santa Clarita, California 91355
Attention: Ms. Jessica Frank, Community Development Department
(Mancara at Robinson Ranch EIR)

Public hearing(s) will be held before the City of Santa Clarita Planning Commission regarding the proposed project and the adequacy of the Draft EIR, at which time public comments will also be heard.

Responses to Comments/Final EIR. Following the 45-day public comment period and public hearing(s) on the Draft EIR, the Final EIR for the proposed project will be prepared in order to respond to the comments received on the Draft EIR. As required by *CEQA*, the Community Development Department will distribute responses to comments submitted by public agencies to those agencies 10 days prior to certification of the Final EIR.

Certification of the EIR/Project Consideration. At the conclusion of the EIR public hearing process, the Planning Commission will vote on whether to recommend to the City Council: 1) certification of the adequacy of the EIR and 2) approval of the proposed project (Master Case 05-349) and other requested changes or actions. The recommendation will then be presented to the City Council, who will decide what action to take with respect to the EIR and the project.



2.3.3 FINAL EIR

The Final EIR will consist of the Draft EIR, revisions to the Draft EIR, responses to comments addressing concerns raised by responsible agencies or reviewing parties, and the mitigation monitoring and reporting program.

2.4 FORMAT OF THE EIR

The Draft EIR is organized into the following 10 sections:

Section 1.0, Executive Summary, provides a brief project description and summary of the environmental impacts and mitigation measures.

Section 2.0, Introduction and Purpose, provides CEQA compliance information and describes a history of CEQA processing that has taken place for this project.

Section 3.0, Project Description, provides a detailed project description indicating project location, background and history, and project characteristics and objectives, as well as associated discretionary actions requested.

Section 4.0, Basis of Cumulative Analysis, describes the approach and methodology for the cumulative analysis.

Section 5.0, Environmental Analysis, contains a detailed environmental analysis of the existing conditions, project impacts, recommended mitigation measures, and significant unavoidable impacts for the environmental topic areas.

Section 6.0, Alternatives to the Proposed Project, describes a reasonable range of alternatives to the project which could feasibly attain the basic project objectives.

Section 7.0, Other CEQA Considerations, discusses growth-inducing impacts associated with the proposed project; significant irreversible environmental changes that would be involved with the proposed project, should it be implemented; and energy efficiency pursuant to *CEQA Guidelines* Appendix F.

Section 8.0, Significant Unavoidable Environmental Effects Which Cannot Be Avoided If the Proposed Action is Implemented, discusses significant unavoidable environmental changes that would be involved in the proposed action, should it be implemented.

Section 9.0, Effects Found Not to Be Significant, provides an explanation of potential impacts which have been determined not to be significant.

Section 10.0, Organizations and Persons Consulted, identifies all federal, state, or local agencies, other organizations, and individuals consulted.

The Appendices (Appendices A – Q) contain technical documentation for the project.



The Final EIR will include two additional sections:

Section 11.0, Mitigation Monitoring Program, summarizes all mitigation measures for the project, the party responsible for implementation of the mitigation, and when the mitigation must be implemented.

Section 12.0, Comments and Responses, includes responses to all written comments, and identifies errata necessary for the Final EIR.

2.5 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

Pertinent documents relating to this EIR have been cited in accordance with *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15148, which encourages “incorporation by reference” as a means of reducing redundancy and length of environmental reports. The following documents are available for public review at the City of Santa Clarita and hereby incorporated by reference into this EIR. Information contained within these documents has been utilized for this EIR.

Santa Clarita General Plan, Adopted June 14, 2011. One Valley One Vision (OVOV) is a joint effort between the City of Santa Clarita (City), the County of Los Angeles (County), and Santa Clarita Valley (Valley) residents and businesses to create a single vision and guidelines for the future growth of the Valley and the preservation of natural resources. Realizing that development within both jurisdictions can have regional implications, the City and County have jointly endeavored to prepare planning policies and guidelines to guide future development within the Santa Clarita Valley. The result of this work effort required the adoption of two separate documents. The City adopted a new General Plan and environmental impact report (EIR), while the County adopted a new Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan to replace the 1990 Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan and prepared its own EIR.

The Santa Clarita General Plan includes the following eight mandatory and optional elements: Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Safety, Noise, Open Space and Conservation, and Economic Development. The Santa Clarita General Plan serves as a foundation for making land use decisions based on goals and policies related to land use, transportation, population growth and distribution, open space, resource preservation and utilization, air and water quality, noise impacts, public safety, infrastructure, and other related physical, social, and economic factors. The Santa Clarita General Plan sets out a long-range vision and comprehensive policy framework for how the City could grow and develop, provide public services, and maintain the qualities that define Santa Clarita over the next 20 years, except where specific policies target other dates as set forth in the plan documents.

Program Environmental Impact Report for the City of Santa Clarita’s One Valley One Vision General Plan, certified June 14, 2011. The Santa Clarita General Plan EIR, a Program EIR, evaluated the impacts of implementing the Santa Clarita General Plan, the consideration of broad policy alternatives, and program-wide mitigation measures. The Program EIR also determined when subsequent environmental review would be needed for a specific development proposal that is consistent with the General Plan. The Program EIR analyzed the potential environmental impacts at buildout, which assumed that the Santa Clarita Valley would home to approximately 460,000 to 485,000 residents, comprising 150,000 to 160,000 households. The estimated number of new jobs under General Plan buildout ranges from



98,322 to 128,850. Added to existing jobs within the Valley, the total number of jobs in the planning area is estimated to range from 217,910 to 286,254 at General Plan buildout.

The Program EIR reviewed 17 environmental topic areas: Aesthetics; Agriculture Resources; Air Quality; Biological Resources; Community Services, Cultural Resources; Geology, Soils & Seismicity; Global Warming and Climate Change; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; Hydrology and Water Quality; Land Use; Mineral Resources; Noise; Population and Housing; Public Services; Parks and Recreation; Transportation and Circulation; Utilities and Infrastructure; and Water Service.

For reference purposes in this EIR, this document will be referred to as the Santa Clarita General Plan EIR or General Plan Program EIR.

Significant Unavoidable Impacts

The impacts identified below could not be feasibly mitigated and would result in a significant unavoidable impact associated with implementation of the Santa Clarita General Plan. The City Council adopted a Statement of Overriding Considerations for these impacts as part of the EIR certification.

- Air Quality
 - Construction Emission Impacts
 - Operational Emission Impacts
- Global Warming and Climate Change
 - Greenhouse Gas Emissions Impacts
- Agriculture Resources
 - Loss of Important Farmland
- Biological Resources
 - Loss of Habitat
 - Impacts to Listed, Proposed, or Candidate Species
 - Loss of Wildlife Movement Opportunities
 - Loss of Connectivity between Two Units of Angeles National Forest
- Water Services
 - Local Water Supplies Unable to Meet OVOV Buildout Needs
- Solid Waste
 - Insufficient landfill capacity to Meet OVOV Buildout Needs
- Noise
 - Short-term Construction Impacts

City of Santa Clarita Unified Development Code, last amended May 10, 2011. The *City of Santa Clarita Unified Development Code (UDC)*, provided as Title 17 of the *Santa Clarita Municipal Code*, sets forth all of the procedures for the administration of zoning, subdivision and grading. It provides for the procedures for the review and approval of all development



applications including but not limited to applications for construction, grading, division of land, amendments to the unified development code, variances, conditional use permits, and pre-existing legal uses and structures.

2.6 CEQA DOCUMENT TIERING

Both the *Public Resources Code* and the *CEQA Guidelines* discuss the use of “tiering” environmental impact reports by lead agencies. *Public Resources Code* Section 21068.5 defines “tiering” as:

“The coverage of general matters and environmental effects in an environmental impact report prepared for a policy, plan, program or ordinance followed by narrower or site-specific environmental impact reports which incorporate by reference the discussion in any prior environmental impact report and which concentrate on the environmental effects which: (a) are capable of being mitigated, or (b) were not analyzed as significant effects on the environment in the prior environmental impact report.”

Tiering is a method to streamline EIR preparation by allowing a Lead Agency to focus on the issues that are ripe for decision and exclude from consideration issues already decided or not yet read for decisions (*CEQA Guidelines* Sections 15152 and 15385). The concept of tiering anticipates a multi-tiered approach to preparing EIRs. The first-tier EIR covers general issues in a broader program-oriented analysis, including important program resource and mitigation commitments required to be implemented at the project-level. Subsequent tiers incorporate by reference the general discussions from the broader document, concentrating on the issues specific to the proposed action being evaluated (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15152).

First-tier documents are usually Program EIRs, Master EIRs, General Plan EIRs, Staged EIRs, Redevelopment Plan EIRs, or similar EIRs. Second-tier documents are typically Project EIRs, Focused EIRs, and Mitigated Negative Declarations that evaluate the impacts of a single activity undertaken to implement the plan, program, or policy.¹

When an EIR has been prepared and certified for a program or plan consistent with CEQA’s tiering requirements, a Lead Agency for a later project pursuant to or consistent with the program or plan should limit the EIR on the later project to effects that were not examined as significant effects on the environment in the prior EIR. In those situations where a programmatic document does not specifically address and analyze the impacts and mitigation measures necessary for a project-level action, the project-level environmental review can be streamlined by tiering from the program-level documents. Agencies are encouraged to tier their CEQA analysis to avoid repetition of issues and to focus on the issues for decision at each level of review. Subsequent CEQA compliance involves either the preparation of an EIR or Negative Declaration.

For purposes of tiering, significant environmental effects have been “adequately addressed” in the first-tier document if the Lead Agency determines that the significant environmental effects:

- Have been mitigated or avoided as a result of the prior EIR and adopted findings in connection with that prior EIR;

¹ Ibid.



- Have been examined at a sufficient detail in the prior EIR to enable those effects to be mitigated or avoided by site-specific revisions, the imposition of conditions, or by other means with the approval of the later project; and
- Cannot be mitigated to avoid or substantially lessen the significant impacts despite the project proponent's willingness to accept all feasible mitigation measures, and the only purpose of including analysis of such effects in another EIR would be to put the agency in a position to adopt a statement of overriding considerations with respect to the effects.

In the case of this proposed project, a Final Program EIR for the OVOV General Plan (Santa Clarita General Plan) has been prepared. The Program EIR analyzed the impacts associated with implementation of the policies contained in the OVOV General Plan (Santa Clarita General Plan) that are intended to guide growth and development in the City. The growth anticipated under the OVOV General Plan (Santa Clarita General Plan) was described previously in Section 2.5, Incorporation By Reference, as were the 17 topical areas reviewed in the Program EIR.

The OVOV General Plan (Santa Clarita General Plan) Program EIR is considered a first-tier EIR. The EIR for this proposed project is considered a second-tier EIR, and the analysis in this EIR has: 1) incorporated by reference the OVOV General Plan (Santa Clarita General Plan) Program EIR and 2) will tier the analysis in this EIR to focus on impacts not previously analyzed in the OVOV General Plan (Santa Clarita General Plan) Program EIR.

The first-tier EIR (Santa Clarita General Plan Program EIR) provided analysis for the topics of: Aesthetics; Agriculture Resources; Air Quality; Biological Resources; Community Services; Cultural Resources; Geology, Soils & Seismicity; Global Warming and Climate Change; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; Hydrology and Water Quality; Land Use; Mineral Resources; Noise; Population and Housing; Public Services; Parks and Recreation; Transportation and Circulation; Utilities and Infrastructure; and Water Service.

For purposes of this EIR, the Santa Clarita General Plan Program EIR has adequately addressed the proposed project's impacts related to Agricultural Resources; Community Services; Cultural Resources; Land Use; Mineral Resources; and Population and Housing, as the growth anticipated under the proposed project is consistent with and accounted for in the projected growth anticipated under the Santa Clarita General Plan.

Topics to be tiered off the Santa Clarita General Plan Program EIR in this EIR (second-tier EIR) include Aesthetics; Biological Resources; Traffic and Circulation; Air Quality; Greenhouse Gas; Noise; Hydrology and Water Quality; Geology, Soils, and Seismicity, and Public Services and Utilities (Fire Protection, Police Protection, Schools/Education, Parks and Recreation, Solid Waste, Water Supply, Wastewater, Electricity, Natural Gas).

This second-tier EIR will be used by the Lead Agency (City) to evaluate the proposed project's environmental impacts, and can be further used to modify, approve, or deny the approval of the proposed project based on the analysis it provides.