

1 Introduction

This document is a Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Castro Valley General Plan. The County of Alameda (the County) has prepared the FEIR in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The County is the lead agency responsible for ensuring that the proposed Castro Valley General Plan (General Plan) complies with CEQA.

PURPOSE

Alameda County is the lead agency responsible for ensuring that the proposed Castro Valley General Plan, which will be part of the Alameda County General Plan, is adopted in compliance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et. seq.) and the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3). The Final EIR is comprised of the Draft EIR (DEIR) and this document, which includes a new chapter that deals with Climate Change, comments on and responses to comments on the DEIR, and revisions to the DEIR. The revisions to the DEIR include changes to the text, maps, and tables that reflect changes to the boundaries of the Castro Valley Planning Area that the Board of Supervisors approved in August 2007 after the public review period for the DEIR concluded.

The proposed changes to the DEIR do not include any significant new information that would require recirculation of the document. Pursuant to Section 15088.5, such changes would include:

- A new significant environmental impact that would result from implementation of the proposed Plan or a new mitigation measure;
- A substantial increase in the severity of an environmental impact requiring the adoption of additional mitigation measures to reduce the impact to a less than significant level;
- A feasible project alternative or mitigation measure that is considerably different from those previously analyzed, which the project's proponents have declined to adopt even though it would clearly lessen the project's significant impacts;
- A determination that meaningful public review and comment on the DEIR was precluded because the DEIR was inadequate and conclusory.

The FEIR is intended to disclose to County decision makers, responsible agencies, organizations, and the general public, the potential impacts of implementing the proposed General Plan. This program level analysis addresses potential impacts of activities associated with implementation of the General Plan, which are described in Chapter 2: Project Description of the Draft EIR.

CEQA requires that the agency with primary responsibility for approval of a project (the lead agency) evaluate the project's potential impacts and determine the level of environmental review required. More specifically, this EIR can serve three primary purposes:

- Ensure that Alameda County meets CEQA requirements by providing a complete and comprehensive program-level evaluation of the potential impacts of the proposed Castro Valley Plan on the physical environment;
- Inform Castro Valley residents, property owners, and other community members as well as members of the Castro Valley Municipal Advisory Council, County Planning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors of the Plan's potential environmental impacts before taking action; and
- Assist decision-makers in determining what amendments need to be made to County land use regulations and other implementation actions based on a comprehensive assessment of the proposed Plan's environmental impacts.

The primary purpose of the Final EIR is to revise and refine the environmental analysis in the Draft EIR, published in April 2007, and the revised Draft EIR, which was made available for comment in August 2011. The revised Draft EIR included changes to the text, maps, and tables that reflect the expansion of the boundaries of the Castro Valley Planning Area that the Board of Supervisors approved in August 2007 after the public review period for the DEIR concluded as well as a new chapter analyzing the impact of the proposed plan on the emission of greenhouse gases and climate change. The review period for the original Draft EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 2006032036) was from April 10 to May 25, 2007. The 45-day review period on the revised Draft EIR was from August 2 to September 15, 2011. This Final EIR responds to comments received in 2007 on the first DEIR as well as comments submitted during the 45-day public review period for the revised Draft EIR.

This Response Addendum, combined with the Draft EIR, constitutes the Final EIR on the project. This Final EIR amends and incorporates by reference the Draft EIR, which is available as a separately bound document from the Alameda County Community Development Agency, Room 111, 224 West Winton Avenue, Hayward, CA.

This Draft EIR will be used by the Castro Valley Municipal Advisory Council, the Alameda County Planning Commission, and the Alameda County Board of Supervisors as they review and act on the proposed General Plan. Once the Board of Supervisors certifies the Draft EIR and the Final EIR, the County and its agencies will use these documents as a basis for environmental review of projects the County and its agencies undertake within the Castro Valley Planning Area or projects that may have environmental effects within the Castro Valley Planning Area. These agencies may include the Alameda County Redevelopment Agency or other agencies that take actions to implement the Castro Valley Redevelopment Strategic Plan.

GENERAL PLAN PROCESS & PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The proposed General Plan was prepared over a seven-year period from 2004 to 2011 with extensive input from the community. The planning effort began during the summer of 2004 with a meeting in Castro Valley that more than 400 people attended. The proposed policies and actions were developed through a series of six interactive public workshops and four meetings of the Castro Valley Municipal Advisory Council (MAC).

The first workshop outlined the planning process and provided an opportunity for participants to identify issues of concern and express their goals and desires for the community's future. Four subsequent sessions included an overview of existing conditions and issues; specific topics including residential neighborhoods, transportation, public facilities, commercial areas and economic development; and community input on priorities and alternative strategies for achieving objectives over the next 20 years. At a fifth workshop in December, 2006, participants provided feedback on a list of 15 major initiatives proposed to accomplish community goals during the next 20 years and voted on priority projects and programs to carry out the initiatives. The sixth workshop, on March 29, 2006, was a scoping session for the environmental review process and also included review of land use proposals, population and employment projections, and traffic impacts policies, and proposed actions.

The Notice of Preparation for the Draft EIR was filed with the State Office of Planning and Research Clearinghouse on March 7, 2007 (SCH# 2006032036). Appendices A and B include the NOP and the comments received.

The Castro Valley MAC held hearings on the draft Plan and the EIR at meetings in February and April 2007. During those meetings, some residents living in the western part of Castro Valley objected to the fact that neighborhoods between I-580 and Stanton Avenue that were covered by the 1985 Castro Valley Plan were not within the planning area for the updated Castro Valley Plan. Instead, these neighborhoods, along with Hillcrest Knolls, were proposed to be included in the area covered by the Eden Plan. After a hearing before the Alameda County Planning Commission, in August 2007, the Board of Supervisors voted to adjust the planning area boundary and include these neighborhoods and the County-owned Fairmont Campus.

At workshops in February 2009 and March 2010, residents and property owners from the expanded planning area provided comments. In July 2010, the County issued a revised draft of the General Plan for public review.

APPROACH

This is a Program EIR, which the CEQA Guidelines defines as an EIR prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either geographically, as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions; in connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects, which can be mitigated in similar ways. (Section 15168)

This EIR has been prepared for use as a basic reference document to avoid unnecessary repetition of facts or analysis in subsequent project-specific assessments. It focuses on the overall effects of the proposed General Plan but does not examine the effects of potential site-specific projects that may be undertaken to implement this program in the future. In fact, as noted below, this EIR assumes that specific development projects will require independent and more detailed environmental assessment to meet CEQA requirements. Because many of the proposed policies are intended to be general, with details to be specified during implementation, many of the impacts can only be described in general or qualitative terms.

In order to carry out many of the proposed policies, the County needs to adopt or approve specific actions such as zoning regulations, zoning map amendments, specific plans, capital improvement programs, etc. This EIR may, but will not necessarily, preclude the need for environmental review of these projects.

This Program EIR is intended as the basic environmental assessment for an overall program of projects that would be undertaken over a period of 15 years or longer. It represents the best effort to evaluate potential effects of the proposed General Plan given its long-term horizon. While many conditions will likely change during the build-out period, the EIR reflects the best current knowledge of development, economic, travel, and other factors. The EIR is also based on a few key assumptions:

- Specific plans applicable to the Planning Area and individual development projects prepared pursuant to the General Plan will be receive project-specific environmental evaluation, as necessary, before approval by the County;
- All policies in the General Plan will be fully implemented and all future development in the Planning Area will be consistent with the General Plan Land Use Map; and
- Build-out of the General Plan will occur by 2025. Development will be incremental but will not be undertaken in discrete phases. Conditions affecting development between adoption and buildout will vary according to market forces and decisions by individual property owners and developers. For this reason, any assumptions about interim stages would be speculative.

ISSUES DISCUSSED IN THE EIR

The process for identifying issues to be evaluated in this EIR included the initial analysis of existing conditions, comments made during community workshops on the General Plan and at the Scoping Meeting held on March 29, 2006, and responses to the Notice of Preparation. Based on this input and evaluation of the Planning Area's physical characteristics, development potential, and future prospects, it was determined that the General Plan could have potentially significant impacts in the following areas:

- Land Use
- Parks, Open Space, and Recreation
- Public Facilities and Services
- Transportation and Circulation
- Biological Resources
- Fire Hazards
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Seismic, Geological, and Landslide Hazards
- Hydrology, Flooding, and Water Resources

- Hazardous Materials
- Cultural Resources
- Visual Quality

As noted above, the revisions to the DEIR included preparation of a new chapter that evaluates the Plan's potential impact on Climate Change.

DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

Section 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines allows an EIR to incorporate by reference all or portions of documents that are a matter of public record or are generally available to the public. All of these documents are available from the Alameda County Planning Department, 224 West Winton Avenue, Hayward, California. The Castro Valley Plan documents can be downloaded from the Castro Valley General Plan website at <<http://www.castrovalleygeneralplan.org>> and the Draft Redevelopment Strategic Plan can be downloaded from the County Redevelopment Agency website at <<http://www.acgov.org/cda/redevelop/projects/cv/plan.htm>>

Castro Valley General Plan Existing Conditions Report (March 2005). This document includes baseline information regarding existing conditions and anticipated trends and future conditions that will influence future development in the Castro Valley Planning Area. It includes a preliminary list of planning issues that was refined as the planning process proceeded. The Existing Conditions Report was used as a basis for identifying alternative approaches for meeting the community's objectives and for the environmental setting descriptions in this document.

Castro Valley General Plan Public Workshop Summaries (July 2004, November 2004, March 2005, July 2005, December 2005). This series of reports presents background information about the topics the Plan covers, describes alternative strategies for approaching the issues of foremost concern to Castro Valley and summarizes the major themes and comments expressed by the community in response to these proposals.

Castro Valley Redevelopment Strategic Plan (December 2005) The Strategic Plan is the result of a planning process undertaken by the Alameda County Community Development Agency to develop a physical improvement plan for the Castro Valley Boulevard Corridor and create a strategy for enhancing retail activity in the downtown area. The Castro Valley Redevelopment Citizen's Advisory Committee participated in formulating the Plan, which implements the Eden Area Redevelopment Plan's proposals for the Castro Valley Sub-Area.

Castro Valley Central Business District Specific Plan (1993)

Alameda Countywide Transportation Plan (2004)

Fairview Area Specific Plan (1997)

Alameda County General Code, Title 17 (Zoning)

Eden Area Implementation Plan (2000)

Alameda County General Plan: Resources Conservation Element (1994); Scenic Route Element (1966 amended 1994); Open Space Element (1973); Housing Element (2003)

Specific Plan for Areas of Environmental Significance (1977)

Specific Plan for the Upper Madison Avenue/Common Road Area (1975)

Unincorporated Eden Area (Portion) Plan (1983 amended 1995)

ORGANIZATION OF FEIR

The FEIR is organized into the following chapters:

Chapter 1 discusses the use and organization of the Final EIR.

Chapter 2 summarizes the EIR's findings.

Chapter 3 lists all of the agencies and individuals that submitted either written or oral comments on the Draft EIR, reproduces all comments, and provides numbered responses to the comments.

Chapter 4 includes a table that lists revisions to the Draft EIR by chapter and page, in the same order as the revisions would appear in the Draft EIR. Revised tables and maps follow the table. Chapter 4 also includes the new chapter (3.14), which analyzes how implementation of the proposed Plan may contribute to global climate change through greenhouse gas emissions.

Appendix A is a correspondence table listing changes in goals, policies, and actions from the 2007 Plan. The entire revised Draft Plan can be downloaded from the Castro Valley General Plan website at http://www.castrovalleygeneralplan.org/plan_docs.htm