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INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Ranch Project (proposed project) Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, Pub. Res. Code § 21000 et seq., as amended (CEQA) and the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, Cal. Code Regs. Title 14, § 15000 et seq. (CEQA Guidelines). The City of Antioch is the lead agency for the environmental review of the proposed project evaluated herein and has the principal responsibility for approving the project. As required by Section 15121 of the CEQA Guidelines, this EIR will (a) inform public agency decision-makers, and the public generally, of the significant environmental effects of the project, (b) identify possible ways to minimize the significant adverse environmental effects, and (c) describe reasonable project alternatives. The public agency shall consider the information in the EIR along with other information that may be presented to the agency.

1.2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This section provides an overview of the project location and components. For additional project description details, please refer to Chapter 3, Project Description, of this EIR.

Project Location

The proposed project is located in the southeastern portion of the City of Antioch in eastern Contra Costa County, California. The City of Antioch is bordered to the north by the San Joaquin River Delta; to the east by the City of Brentwood and the City of Oakley; to the west by the City of Pittsburg and unincorporated portions of Contra Costa County; and to the south by unincorporated portions of Contra Costa County. The project site is located within the Sand Creek Focus Area of the General Plan, which contains lands designated by the Antioch General Plan for open space, residential, commercial, and mixed-use development. The project site is surrounded by a single-family residential subdivision to the north, undeveloped land to the south (planned for future residential), Deer Valley Road and Kaiser Permanente Antioch Medical Center to the east, and undeveloped land and Empire Mine Road (planned for future residential) to the west.

Project Components

The proposed project consists of a residential development on 551.5 acres of primarily undeveloped land, including multiple single-family residential neighborhoods, various public facilities and amenities, and circulation and access improvements, as well as associated infrastructure improvements to serve the proposed planned community. The proposed project includes two scenarios: a Multi-Generational Plan and a Traditional Plan. The Multi-

Generational Plan would include a wide range of housing, including active adult housing, while the Traditional Plan would include only all-ages housing, and would not include active adult housing. Buildout of the project would occur over the course of a number of years, as dictated by the economy and demand for new housing in the project area. For the purposes of the CEQA analysis presented in this EIR, and based on the information regarding buildout of the project provided by the project applicant, build out of the project is anticipated to occur over three phases, starting from east to west and from north to south, with the infrastructure and amenities corresponding to new unit demands. Although actual buildout of the project may occur in more than three phases, analyzing potential environmental impacts under a three-phase development scenario provides an environmental worst-case analysis, thus should the project be constructed over a longer phasing period, environmental impacts of the proposed project would likely be less than the impacts analyzed in this EIR. Phasing would be similar for both proposed development scenarios. A finalized phasing plan would be submitted to the City by the project applicant concurrent with the first tentative map application.

The project applicant is seeking discretionary approval of the following entitlements from the City of Antioch:

- *General Plan Text and Map Amendments.* The project would require the approval of General Plan text and map amendments to the Land Use Element to change the land use designations of the site from Golf Course Community/Senior Housing/Open Space, Hillside and Estate Residential, and Public/Quasi Public to Low Density Residential, Medium Low Density Residential, Mixed Use, Public/Quasi Public, and Open Space. The Multi-Generational Plan would designate a portion of the site as Senior Housing. The Circulation Element of the General Plan would be amended to reflect the proposed alignment of Sand Creek Road.
- *Rezoning.* The project would require a rezone from the current zoning, Study Area (S), to Planned Development (PD). The PD would include special development standards for the project.
- *Design Guidelines.* The design guidelines would supplement the proposed development standards.
- *Resource Management Plan.* Pursuant to section 4.4.6.7(t) of the City of Antioch General Plan, the applicant will prepare a Resource Management Plan for City approval.
- *Development Agreement.* The Development Agreement would assure the City that the proposed project would proceed to its completion in compliance with the plans submitted by the applicant, and assure the applicant of vested rights to develop the project.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE EIR

As provided in CEQA Guidelines Section 15021, public agencies are charged with the duty to avoid or minimize environmental damage where feasible. The public agency has an obligation to balance a variety of public objectives, including economic, environmental, and social factors.

CEQA requires the preparation of an EIR prior to approving any project that may have a significant effect on the environment. For the purposes of CEQA, the term *project* refers to the whole of an action that has the potential for resulting in a direct physical change or a reasonably

foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378[a]). With respect to the proposed project, the City has determined that the proposed development is a project that has the potential for resulting in significant environmental effects within the definition of CEQA.

The EIR is an informational document that appraises decision makers and the general public of the potential significant environmental effects of a proposed project. An EIR must describe a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives to the project and identify feasible measures to minimize any significant effects. The lead agency, which is the City of Antioch for this project, is required to consider the information in the EIR in deciding whether to approve or deny the application. The basic requirements for an EIR include discussions of the environmental setting, environmental impacts, mitigation measures, alternatives, growth inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts.

1.4 EIR PROCESS

The EIR process begins with the decision by the lead agency to prepare an EIR, either during a preliminary review of a project or at the conclusion of an Initial Study. Once the decision is made to prepare an EIR, the lead agency sends a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to appropriate government agencies and, when required, to the State Clearinghouse (SCH) in the Office of Planning and Research (OPR), which will ensure that responsible and trustee State agencies reply within the required time. The SCH assigns an identification number to the project, which then becomes the identification number for all subsequent environmental documents on the project. Commenting agencies have 30 days to respond to the NOP and provide information regarding alternatives and mitigation measures they wish to have explored in the EIR and to provide notification regarding whether the agency will be a responsible agency or a trustee agency for the project. An NOP (see Appendix A) was prepared for the proposed project and was circulated from August 11, 2017 to September 11, 2017. A public scoping meeting was held on September 6, 2017 for the purpose of informing the public and receiving comments on the scope of the environmental analysis to be prepared for the proposed project. See Section 1.6 below for a summary of comments received on the NOP.

As soon as the Draft EIR is completed, a notice of completion will be filed with the SCH and a public notice of availability will be published to inform interested parties that a Draft EIR is available for agency and public review. In addition, the notice provides information regarding the location of copies of the Draft EIR available for public review and any public meetings or hearings that are scheduled. The Draft EIR will be circulated for a period of 45 days, during which time reviewers may make comments. The lead agency must respond to comments in writing, describing the disposition of any significant environmental issues raised and explaining in detail the reasons for not accepting any specific comments concerning major environmental issues. If significant new information, as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5, is added to an EIR after public notice of availability is given but before certification of the EIR, the revised EIR or affected chapters must be recirculated for an additional public review period with related comments and responses.

A Final EIR will be prepared, containing the Draft EIR or a revision thereof as well as comments and responses to comments on the Draft EIR. Before approving a project, the lead agency shall certify that the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, and that the Final EIR has been presented to the decision-making body of the lead agency, which has reviewed and considered the EIR. The lead agency shall also certify that the Final EIR reflects the lead agency's independent judgment and analysis.

The findings prepared by the lead agency must be based on substantial evidence in the administrative record. If the decision-making body elects to proceed with a project that would have unavoidable significant impacts, then a Statement of Overriding Considerations explaining the decision to balance the benefits of the project against unavoidable environmental impacts must be prepared.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE EIR

This EIR constitutes a project-level analysis, and pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15161, covers "all phases of the project including planning, construction, and operation." State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(a) states, in pertinent part:

An EIR shall identify and focus on the significant environmental effects of the proposed project. In assessing the impact of a proposed project on the environment, the lead agency should normally limit its examination to changes in the existing physical conditions in the affected area as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published, or where no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced.

Pursuant to these guidelines, the scope of this EIR addresses specific issues and concerns identified as potentially significant in the NOP prepared for the proposed project (see Appendix A). The City determined that the following issues will be addressed in the EIR:

- Aesthetics;
- Agricultural Resources;
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions;
- Biological Resources;
- Cultural Resources;
- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources;
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
- Hydrology and Water Quality;
- Land Use and Planning/Population and Housing;
- Noise;
- Public Services, Recreation, and Utilities; and
- Transportation and Circulation.

The evaluation of effects is presented on a resource-by-resource basis in Chapters 4.1 through 4.12 of the EIR. Each technical chapter is divided into four sections: Introduction, Existing Environmental Setting, Regulatory Context, and Impacts and Mitigation Measures.

Impacts that are determined to be significant in Chapter 4, and for which feasible mitigation measures are not available to reduce those impacts to a less-than-significant level, are identified as *significant and unavoidable*. Chapter 5 of the EIR presents a discussion of growth-inducing impacts, summary of cumulative impacts, energy conservation, and significant irreversible environmental changes associated with the project. Alternatives to the proposed project are discussed in Chapter 6 of the EIR.

1.6 COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE NOP

The City of Antioch received 51 written comments and verbal comments during the open comment period for the NOP for the proposed project (see Appendix B).

The following list, categorized by issue, summarizes the concerns:

<p><u>Aesthetics</u> (<i>c.f.</i> Chapter 4.1)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aesthetic impacts on loss of the hillsides and open space.
<p><u>Air Quality and GHG Emissions</u> (<i>c.f.</i> Chapter 4.3)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts of GHG emissions during construction and long-term operational emissions, as well as in the context on AB 32 and SB 375 and ability to meet the State’s reduction targets. • Increased GHG emissions as a result of increased vehicle miles traveled (VMT). • Cumulative impacts on regional criteria air pollutants and GHG emissions in relation to regional climate change goals and BAAQMD thresholds and adding significant residential development at the edge of the City’s current build-out footprint.
<p><u>Biological Resources</u> (<i>c.f.</i> Chapter 4.4)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presence of listed rare, threatened, endangered, locally unique, and special-status species, including the Mount Diablo Buckwheat. • Potential impacts to wildlife habitat along Sand Creek and other wildlife corridors.
<p><u>Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources</u> (<i>c.f.</i> Chapter 4.6)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development at higher elevations within the project site. • Risks of soil erosion near the ravine bed/streams. • Risks of collapse of historical mine shafts within the project site.

<p><u>Hazards and Hazardous Materials</u> (c.f. Chapter 4.7)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased risks of wildland fires.
<p><u>Hydrology and Water Quality</u> (c.f. Chapter 4.8)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential impacts to streams, creek banks, or wetlands, including Sand Creek. • Proposed drainage sites and detention basins and ability to prevent pollutants from contaminating Sand Creek and other nearby waterways. • Development on floodplains and the effects on the local watershed. • Potential impacts to groundwater and creek water resources.
<p><u>Land Use and Planning/Population and Housing</u> (c.f. Chapter 4.9)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratio of dwelling units per acre. • Mass grading of the hillsides. • Open space surrounding the City. • Current excess vacant housing. • Potential impacts to the jobs-housing balance in the region. • Change in land uses and associated General Plan changes that could affect traffic and residential uses including the removal of the golf course to add more residential development.
<p><u>Noise</u> (c.f. Chapter 4.10)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential noise impacts to neighboring residential communities.
<p><u>Public Services, Recreation, and Utilities</u> (c.f. Chapter 4.11)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumulative impacts related to solid waste, stormwater, and other utility services. • Cumulative impacts related to fire protection, police protection services, and emergency response services, including costs associated with provision of services. • Overcrowding of the school district. • Long-term funding mechanisms to maintain and operate the staging areas for parks and trails. • Safety and connectivity of all proposed trails within the park staging area, as well as consideration of impacts on resources. • Safety for bicyclists and pedestrians along and crossing Deer Valley Road. • Cumulative impacts on water supply in East Contra Costa County. • Consideration of State and regional drought conditions.
<p><u>Transportation and Circulation</u> (c.f. Chapter 4.12)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumulative transportation and circulation impacts, including public transportation and extension of regional roadways.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient signalization on roadways between the project site and the SR 4 Bypass. • Unsafe regional road and traffic conditions, especially during school hours. • Cumulative impacts on SR 4 and regional roadways. • Improvement of regional accessibility through the use of alternative modes of transportation beyond automobiles. • Analysis of VMT resulting from the proposed project. • Provision of a schematic illustration of walking, biking, and auto conditions at the project site and study area roadways. • Potential impacts on pedestrians, bicycles, disabled travelers, and transit performance, including counter measures and trade-offs resulting from mitigating VMT increases. • Project-generated travel demand and estimated costs of public transportation improvements, including viable funding sources.
<p><u>Alternatives</u> (c.f. Chapter 6)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project alternatives that include increased preservation of Open Space and hillsides.

All of these issues are addressed in this EIR, in the relevant chapters identified in the first column.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE EIR

The EIR for the proposed project is organized into the following chapters:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Provides an introduction and overview describing the intended use of the EIR and the review and certification process, as well as summaries of the chapters included in the EIR and summaries of the issues and concerns received from the public and public agencies during the NOP review period.

Chapter 2 – Executive Summary

Summarizes the elements of the project and the environmental impacts that would result from implementation of the proposed project, describes proposed mitigation measures, and indicates the level of significance of impacts after mitigation. Acknowledges alternatives that could reduce or avoid significant impacts.

Chapter 3 – Project Description

Provides a detailed description of the proposed project, including the project’s location, background information, major objectives, and technical characteristics.

Chapter 4 – Existing Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation

Contains a project-level and cumulative analysis of environmental issue areas associated with the proposed project. Each environmental issue chapter contains an introduction and description of

the project setting, identifies impacts, and recommends appropriate mitigation measures, if needed.

Chapter 5 – Statutorily Required Sections

Provides discussions required by CEQA regarding impacts that would result from the proposed project, including a summary of cumulative impacts, potential growth-inducing impacts, impacts related to energy conservation, significant and unavoidable impacts, and significant irreversible changes to the environment.

Chapter 6 – Alternatives Analysis

Describes the alternatives to the proposed project, their respective environmental effects, and a determination of the environmentally superior alternative.

Chapter 7 – References

Provides bibliographic information for all references and resources cited.

Chapter 8 – EIR Authors and Persons Consulted

Lists EIR and technical report authors who provided technical assistance in the preparation and review of the Draft EIR.

Appendices

Includes the NOP, comments received during the NOP comment period, and all technical reports prepared for the proposed project.