

1 Introduction

This Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared on behalf of the City of Antioch in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This chapter outlines the purpose of and the overall approach to the preparation of the EIR on the Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan. The City of Antioch is the lead agency responsible for ensuring that the Specific Plan complies with CEQA.

1.1 PURPOSE OF EIR

The Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan consists of policies and proposals to guide the future growth within the Hillcrest Station Area, referred to in this document as the Planning Area (see Chapter 2: Project Description for discussion and map). This Draft EIR evaluates the potential impacts of the adoption of the proposed Specific Plan. This EIR will also be used as a reference for subsequent environmental review of infrastructure improvements, zoning amendments, impact fees and development proposals. The City will determine whether the environmental effects of any proposed projects are addressed by this EIR, and may require additional environmental analysis, revisions to the project, conditions of approval, and/or mitigation measures.

The EIR on the proposed Plan has three purposes:

- First, the EIR will help the City of Antioch meet California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements for analysis of environmental impacts by including a complete and comprehensive programmatic evaluation of the physical impacts of the proposed Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan and its alternatives.
- Second, the EIR will inform residents and members of the City Council and Planning Commission of the environmental impacts prior to the Commission and Council taking action on the Plan. This information will assist City officials in reviewing and adopting the proposed Plan.
- Third, the EIR will assist local decision-makers in determining appropriate amendments to Antioch's land use regulations and other implementation actions, based on a balanced assessment of the environmental impacts of the Plan.

CEQA requires that the agency with the primary responsibility over the approval of a project (the lead agency) evaluate the potential impacts of the project in an EIR. The City is required to prepare an EIR on the Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan in order to provide the City Council, as the ultimate decision-making body, with an informational document for use in evaluating the proposed Plan. After adoption, the EIR will serve the additional function of providing direction to the City in implementation of the new Plan. The EIR also evaluates reasonable alternatives to the proposed Plan.

In addition to evaluating the Plan, the EIR evaluates a “No Project Alternative” and one additional alternative to the proposed Plan. The “No Project Alternative” discusses the result of not implementing the proposed Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan. The other alternative evaluates an alternative with a lower intensity of development. This alternative is identified as the environmentally superior alternative; however it does not fully meet the project objectives for compact transit-oriented development, and does not mitigate impacts to a less than significant level.

1.2 INTENDED USE OF EIR

This Draft EIR will be used by Antioch residents, elected officials, and City staff during the public review process to evaluate the potential environmental impact of the proposed Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan. The Draft EIR and Final EIR, which includes responses to public comments received during the 45-day comment period, will be certified by the Antioch City Council prior to consideration of the proposed Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan.

1.3 SPECIFIC PLAN PROCESS AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The City of Antioch, in partnership with the Dyett & Bhatia consulting team, led the planning process for the Hillcrest Specific Plan. The other team members included Economic Planning Systems (market and financing analysis), Fehr & Peers (transportation analysis), BKF (infrastructure analysis), ESA (environmental analysis), and Charles M. Salter Associates Inc (noise analysis). BART and Brosamer & Wall, a major property owner, also contributed to the plan by providing data and studies relevant to the area. The process has taken approximately eighteen months.

The planning process began with researching the issues, opportunities, and constraints through field visits and evaluating relevant planning documents and studies. The *Existing Conditions, Opportunities, and Constraints Report* summarized the results. Individual stakeholders were interviewed to provide additional context and understanding of the vision for the area. The *Stakeholder Interviews Summary Report*, reviews the major topics and information gathered during the initial outreach phase. A *Market Overview and Absorption Projections Report* was also prepared, analyzing the market demand and absorption potential for residential, retail, and office uses. All three documents are available for review at the City’s Economic Development Department.

The next stage involved drafting alternative land use and circulation diagrams and evaluating potential traffic, environmental, and market impacts. Meetings with the City Council, consulting team, city staff, and property owners provided feedback in order to refine the diagrams. City Council Study Sessions were conducted on May 20, July 8, and October 28, 2008. The alternative diagrams and draft project description were presented to the Planning Commission as part of the Environmental Impact Report scoping session on June 18, 2008. A community workshop, attended by approximately 50 residents and interested parties, was conducted on September 18, 2008. Comments and concerns expressed at the workshop were incorporated into the plan diagrams and draft plan policies.

Another public workshop was conducted at the Planning Commission meeting on December 3, 2008 to garner feedback community members about the plan policies, final plan diagrams, and the draft implementation program. The diagrams, development summaries, and plan policies were finalized as part of the Draft Specific Plan. These elements were incorporated into the Draft Environmental Impact Report. The public review drafts of the Plan and Draft EIR were released in January 2009. The draft documents were reviewed by the Planning Commission and the City Council in January and February 2009. The final documents were prepared and presented at hearings in March and April 2009.

The Specific Plan includes a general implementation program based on necessary infrastructure and public services that includes general phasing and planning. In addition, the regional planning agencies, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), awarded the City of Antioch a grant to pursue a more detailed Infrastructure Financing and Phasing Plan to support the Hillcrest Station Area Plan. The Infrastructure Financing and Phasing Plan is a separate document and will act as the financing implementation mechanism of the Specific Plan.

Table 1-1 Specific Plan Process

Task 1:	Identify Issues, Opportunities, and Constraints
Task 2:	Community Outreach
Task 3:	Station Area Plan Alternatives
Task 4:	Revised Alternatives
Task 5:	Final Alternatives and Development Standards
Task 6:	Implementation Program
Task 7:	Draft Station Area Specific Plan and Draft EIR
Task 8:	Adoption of Final Plans and Final EIR
Task 9:	Infrastructure and Costs Analysis
Task 10:	Financing Strategy
Task 11:	Infrastructure Financing and Phasing Plan

1.4 APPROACH TO THE STUDY

A program EIR is defined in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15168 as: "...an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either: (1) geographically; (2) as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions; (3) in connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or (4) as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental impacts which can be mitigated in similar ways."

Program EIRs can be used as the basic, general environmental assessment for an overall program of projects developed over the planning horizon, which is expected to be through 2035. A program EIR has several advantages. First, it provides a basic reference document to avoid unnecessary repetition of facts or analysis in subsequent project-specific assessments. Second, it

allows the lead agency to look at the broad, regional impacts of a program of actions before its adoption and eliminates redundant or contradictory approaches to the consideration of regional and cumulative impacts.

As a program EIR, this document focuses on all effects of the proposed Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan; the analysis does not examine the effects of potential site-specific projects that may occur under the overall umbrella of this program in the future. When specific development proposals for the Planning Area are submitted to the City, the City will determine whether the environmental effects of the proposed projects are addressed by this EIR. If the City finds that the proposals would not result in any additional environmental impacts beyond those considered in this EIR, no new environmental analysis would be required. If the City determines that a project would create potential environmental impacts not studied in this EIR, or that environmental conditions have changed substantially since the EIR was prepared, the City could require further environmental review to determine appropriate revisions to the project, conditions of approval, or mitigation measures.

In order to place many of the proposed Specific Plan policies into effect, the City will adopt or approve specific actions—zoning regulations, redevelopment plan amendments, zoning map amendments, development impact fees, capital improvement programs, development projects, etc.—that are consistent with the policies and implementation measures of the Plan.

CEQA mandates that lead agencies adopt mitigation monitoring and reporting programs for projects identified as having significant impacts where mitigation measures have been identified. Mitigation monitoring and reporting programs are intended to ensure compliance during project implementation. These programs provide the additional advantages of providing staff and decision-makers with feedback as to the effectiveness of mitigation measures, as well as the experience and information to shape future mitigation measures.

The proposed Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan is intended to be generally self-mitigating, in that the policies and programs of the proposed Plan are designed to reduce potential environmental impacts. This EIR clearly shows how the impacts of future development in the Plan area will be reduced through implementation of the policies and programs of the proposed Plan. Any residual impact after implementation of these proposed policies and programs is identified and measured against the significance criteria established for each impact area. The significance criteria is an identifiable quantitative, qualitative, or performance level of a particular environmental effect in which non-compliance indicates that the effect is significant.

This EIR represents the best effort to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan given its long-term planning horizon. It can be anticipated that conditions will change; however, the assumptions used are the best available at the time of preparation and reflect existing knowledge of patterns of development and travel patterns.

The proposed Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan EIR is based on the following key assumptions:

- **Full Implementation.** This EIR assumes that all policies in the proposed Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan will be fully implemented and all development will be consistent with the proposed Land Use Plan.

- **Buildout in 2035.** This EIR assumes that the majority of development and redevelopment under the proposed Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan will occur within 27 years. This is the timeline or planning horizon for this analysis. It is understood that development under the proposed Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan will be incremental and timed in response to market conditions. Key assumptions about buildout development intensities and densities are further defined in the Project Description.

1.5 SCOPE OF EIR

The issues evaluated in this EIR were determined during the initial phase of the project. A Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the EIR on the Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan was circulated in June 2008 (received at the State Clearinghouse June 2, 2008) and the City received comments during a 30-day review period. The NOP and comments on that NOP received by the City are in Appendix A of this EIR. An environmental review scoping meeting was held at Antioch City Hall on June 18, 2008. NOP comments, along with input received during public workshops and meetings, helped to identify the major planning and environmental issues and concerns in the Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan and establish the framework and focus of the environmental analysis.

The first step toward completion of this Draft EIR was the initial analysis of the environmental setting. This analysis compiled specific information on the current conditions of the Planning Area, its characteristics, and the major issues it faces. Information on the environmental setting provides background regarding relevant issues and is used to evaluate potential impacts. Based on the initial analysis of the environmental setting, as well as the NOP comments and public meetings, the following issues are analyzed in this EIR:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Circulation and Traffic
- Climate Change
- Cultural Resources
- Geologic and Seismic Hazards
- Hazardous Materials and Safety
- Hydrology and Water Resources
- Land Use and Population
- Noise
- Public Services
- Utilities

Each potential impact is addressed in Chapter 3: Settings, Impact Analysis, and Mitigation, of this EIR.

1.6 DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

Section 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines permits documents of lengthy technical detail to be incorporated by reference in an EIR. Specifically, Section 15150 states that an EIR may "incorporate by reference all or portions of another document which is a matter of public record or is generally available to the public...." Incorporated documents are to be briefly summarized in the EIR and be made available to the public for inspection or reference. The Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan Draft EIR incorporates by reference the documents noted below, which are available at the City of Antioch, Economic Development Department, 3rd and "H" Streets, Antioch, CA 94509:

- **Antioch General Plan Update, 2003.** The Antioch General Plan encompasses a comprehensive strategy for managing the community's future. The Antioch General Plan is the community's statement of what is in its interest, and is the City's most important statement regarding its ultimate physical, economic, and cultural development over the next 25 years (2028).
- **Antioch General Plan Update EIR, July 2003.** The environmental impact report for the General Plan analyzes its buildout and impacts, and lists required mitigation measures.
- **Hillcrest Station Area Draft Specific Plan, January 2009.** The Draft Specific Plan contains the background, goals, policies, standards, and guidelines to develop the Planning Area according to the broad vision and details determined with the City, stakeholders, and economic and environmental experts. The Draft Plan includes an implementation program that names implementation projects and programs, and the public agencies responsible for them. The Draft Plan has been distributed for public review.
- **East Contra Costa BART Extension (eBART) Draft EIR, September 2008.** This EIR includes qualitative and quantitative environmental review of the eBART corridor and the impacts of the proposed eBART project. The proposed eBART project includes building one transit station in the median of SR 4 near the Hillcrest Avenue and SR 4 interchange.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF EIR

The Draft EIR is organized into the following main chapters:

Chapter 2: Project Description. This chapter includes a detailed description of the proposed Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan. The proposed Plan diagrams, proposed land use classification systems, buildout estimates, key policies, and implementation program are presented.

Chapter 3: Environmental Setting, Impact Analysis, and Mitigation. This chapter analyzes the environmental impacts of the proposed Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan. Impacts are organized by major topic. Each topic area includes a description of the environmental setting, significance criteria, impacts, and mitigation measures. Policies in the proposed Hillcrest Station Area Specific Plan that would avoid or reduce the impacts are also discussed.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Alternatives. This chapter compares the impacts of the proposed Plan with a "No Project" scenario based on the current General Plan, and an Alternative Plan with a lower intensity of development.

Chapter 5: CEQA-Required Conclusions. This chapter reviews the growth-inducing and cumulative impacts of the proposed Plan as well as its significant environmental effects.

The Draft EIR also includes a bibliography (Chapter 6), a list of persons and organizations consulted (Chapter 7), the report authors (Chapter 8), a glossary of terms (Chapter 9), and a list of acronyms (Chapter 10). Various technical reports are also included in the Draft EIR in the Appendix.

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