
4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND ASSUMPTIONS USED

The following is an introduction to the environmental analysis for the proposed General Plan Update, including a cumulative analysis and a discussion of general assumptions used in the environmental analysis. The reader is referred to the individual technical sections of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR or DEIR) (Sections 4.1 through 4.14) for further information on the specific assumptions and methodologies used in the analysis for each particular technical subject.

ANALYSIS ASSUMPTIONS USED TO EVALUATE THE IMPACTS OF THE CITY OF CHICO GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

BASELINE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS ASSUMED IN THE DRAFT EIR

Section 15125(a) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an environmental impact report (EIR) include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of a project as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published and the environmental analysis is begun. The CEQA Guidelines also specify that this description of the physical environmental conditions is to normally serve as the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether impacts of a project are considered significant.

The environmental setting conditions of the City of Chico Planning Area are described in detail in the individual technical sections of the Draft EIR (see Sections 4.1 through 4.14). In general, these sections describe the setting of the City of Chico Planning Area as it existed when the NOP for the proposed General Plan Update was released on December 10, 2008. In addition, the Draft EIR also includes any setting information that has been updated since the release of the NOP.

PROJECTED HOUSING AND JOB NEEDS IN 2030

As required by state law, the proposed General Plan Update establishes the long-term plan for physical development of the community, premised upon a projection of future housing and employment needs. The proposed General Plan Update Land Use Element and this section of the EIR describe the projected housing and job needs for Chico in 2030 and summarize how build-out of the Land Use Diagram (anticipated to occur after the year 2030) would meet or exceed the projected future need.

Projected future housing and job needs for the year 2030 are based on a variety of factors, including historic growth trends, local demographic and economic conditions, and community objectives and desires.

Projected Housing (Residential) Needs in 2030

It is estimated that an additional 16,376 dwelling units will be needed by the year 2030 based primarily on the city's historic 2 percent growth rate, which has been relatively stable over the last 40 years. This assumption is consistent with the Butte County Association of Government (BCAG) projections and Regional Housing Need Plan (RNHA) allocation, as well as the California Department of Finance (DOF) estimates. The future mix of dwelling unit types (single-family/multi-family) is assumed to be similar to the City's existing mix, with some housing units provided in mixed-use developments. **Table 4.0-1** lists the housing needs estimated for 2030.

4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND ASSUMPTIONS USED

Projected Job (Nonresidential) Needs in 2030

Estimates of future job needs were based on several factors, including the city's economic health, job market trends, and local opportunities and constraints. Future job estimates were generated for five market sectors: retail, office, industrial, health, and other, such as agriculture and construction. According to the BAE Market Opportunities and Land Absorption Projections conducted in June 2008, it is estimated that by the year 2030 Chico's economy will have expanded to produce 20,852 new jobs. Future nonresidential development needs are summarized in the **Table 4.0-1** in terms of retail, office, industrial, health, and other (e.g., agriculture and resource, construction, service) job sectors.

PROJECTED BUILD-OUT CONDITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

Future growth in the proposed City Sphere of Influence (SOI) is guided by the land uses identified in the proposed General Plan Update Land Use Diagram (see **Figure 3.0-3**). The proposed SOI boundary includes property currently in Butte County, but outside the City of Chico jurisdictional limit. The proposed 2030 General Plan Update does not require these properties to annex to the City; however, for EIR analysis, these properties are assumed to be located within the City of Chico at full General Plan implementation. In other words, the EIR essentially assumes that the future City of Chico boundary and the SOI are contiguous. The Draft EIR impact analysis, including temporary (i.e., construction-related) and operational, direct and indirect environmental effects, is based on the development anticipated in the proposed Land Use Diagram and the transportation improvements identified in the proposed Circulation Plan (see **Figure 3.0-4**).

To meet the projected future housing and job needs, the proposed Land Use Diagram identifies areas of potential change (infill and redevelopment of 15 designated Opportunity Sites), new growth areas (5 designated Special Planning Areas), and areas of stability that are not anticipated to change significantly in the future. In keeping with the proposed General Plan Update Guiding Principles, the land use pattern in areas of growth and potential change includes a greater integration of uses and balance between employment and residential use, with more areas designated for mixed-use development.

To estimate the build-out condition for the proposed Land Use Diagram, development assumptions were established in keeping with the land use designation and policies in the proposed General Plan Update. These assumptions were used to analyze the impacts associated with future development and redevelopment in new growth areas and infill sites. The development assumptions are intended to provide an accurate estimate of future development by establishing average estimated assumptions, rather than overstating impacts by assuming maximum development potential.

Proposed General Plan Update Appendix D includes a description of the land use estimate methodology with a spreadsheet showing the assumed land use mix and distribution, site development considerations, and employment factors for each of the land use designations included in the proposed Land Use Diagram. The spreadsheet in Appendix D also includes estimated average future development assumptions for the three following development types:

1. **Special Planning Areas.** These development assumptions apply within the Special Planning Areas.
2. **Undeveloped Infill Sites.** These development assumptions apply to all vacant land outside the designated Special Planning Areas. This category includes approved but not

4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND ASSUMPTIONS USED

yet developed projects like Meriam Park and Oak Valley, as well as the vacant land within Opportunity Sites.

3. **Underutilized Opportunity Sites.** These values apply to approximately 13–15 percent of the developed property within the 15 designated Opportunity Sites, which is assumed to redevelop with the proposed General Plan Update build-out. The remaining 85–87 percent of this area is accounted for as existing development.

The land use assumptions for identified new growth areas (SPAs) generally reflect a greater mix of uses and a higher density and intensity of development than existing development patterns in Chico. This is consistent with the new desired land use patterns, mixed-use designations, and higher allowed densities and intensities of development, and is based on an evaluation of project case studies.

Table 4.0-1 below lists the housing and job needs projected for 2030 and how build-out under the proposed General Plan Update exceeds the projected need. For more detailed information about the land use projections, see proposed General Plan Update Appendix D.

Build-out of the proposed General Plan Update Land Use Diagram is anticipated to occur after 2030. For purposes of conducting technical analysis of the environmental effects of the proposed General Plan Update (e.g., traffic operation analysis, noise and air quality modeling and analyses); however, this EIR assumes that complete build-out occurs by 2030. It is understood that development that occurs in accordance with the proposed General Plan will be incremental and timed in response to market conditions. However, interim phases, or development scenarios are not evaluated herein, as they are considered speculative.

**TABLE 4.0-1
HOUSING AND JOBS PROJECTED FOR 2030 AND
PLANNED FOR GENERAL PLAN BUILD-OUT**

	Land Use Needs Category	Projected 2030 Needs	Growth Potential per Land Use Diagram	Growth Potential Beyond Projected Need
Housing	<u>Residential Units</u> ¹	<u>16,376 units</u>	<u>21,495 units</u>	<u>5,119 units</u> (+ 31%)
	SF Residential	9,007	8,689	
	MF Residential	7,369	10,835	
	Mixed Use		1,970	
Jobs	<u>Job Sector</u>	<u>20,852 employees</u>	<u>25,582 employees</u>	<u>4,730 employees</u> (+ 23%)
	Retail	4,943	10,633	
	Office	3,935	5,745	
	Industrial	3,371	9,204 ²	
	Health	5,079		
	Other	3,524		

Notes:

1. Single-Family (SF) Residential includes the designations Very Low Density Residential, Low Density Residential, and 50% of Medium Density Residential. Multi-Family (MF) Residential includes the other 50% of Medium Density Residential, Medium-High Density Residential, and High Density Residential. Residential Mixed Use includes the designations Mixed Use Neighborhood Core, Commercial Mixed Use, Regional Commercial, Office Mixed Use, and Industrial Office Mixed Use. The Special Mixed Use designation assumes a 34% Single Family, 53% Multi-Family, 13% Mixed Use split (based on Meriam Park build-out assumptions).

2. Includes Health and Other.

4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND ASSUMPTIONS USED

STRUCTURE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

Sections 4.1 through 4.14 of this Draft EIR contain a detailed description of current setting conditions (including applicable regulatory setting), an evaluation of the direct and indirect environmental effects resulting from the implementation of the proposed General Plan Update, identification of proposed General Plan Update policies and actions, and City of Chico Municipal Code sections that mitigate environmental effects. Furthermore, Sections 4.1 through 4.14 of this Draft EIR contain additional feasible mitigation measures and identify whether significant environmental effects of the project would remain after application of proposed policies, actions, and feasible mitigation measures. The individual technical sections of the Draft EIR include the following information:

Existing Setting

This subsection includes a description of the physical setting associated with the technical area of discussion, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15125. As previously identified, the existing setting is based on conditions as they existed when the NOP for the proposed General Plan Update was released on December 10, 2008.

Regulatory Framework

This subsection identifies applicable federal, state, regional, and local plans, policies, laws, and regulations that apply to the technical area of discussion.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This subsection identifies direct and indirect environmental effects associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update. Standards of significance are identified and used to determine whether the environmental effects are considered “significant” and require the application of mitigation measures. Each environmental impact analysis is identified numerically (e.g., Impact 4.9.1 – Surface Water Quality Impacts) and is supported by substantial evidence.

Mitigation measures for the proposed General Plan Update were developed through a review of the environmental effects of the proposed General Plan Update by consultants with technical expertise as well as by environmental professionals. The mitigation measures identified consist of “performance standards” that identify clear requirements that would avoid or minimize significant environmental effects (the use of performance standard mitigation is allowed under CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a) and is supported by case law *Rio Vista Farm Bureau Center v. County of Solano* ([1st Dist. 1992] 5 Cal. App. 4th at pp. 371, 375–376 [7 Cal. Rptr. 2d 307])).

APPROACH TO THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 requires that EIRs include an analysis of the cumulative impacts of a project when the project’s effect is considered cumulatively considerable. Each technical section in the Draft EIR considers whether the project’s effect on anticipated cumulative setting conditions is cumulatively considerable (i.e., a significant effect). “Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15065(a)(3)). The determination of whether the project’s impact on cumulative conditions is considerable is based on a number of factors including consideration of applicable public agency standards, consultation with public

agencies, and expert opinion. The environmental effects of potential development within the General Plan Planning Area are incorporated in the cumulative impact analysis contained within each technical section. In addition, Section 5.0, Cumulative Impacts Summary, provides a summary of the cumulative impacts associated with the General Plan.

Definition of Cumulative Setting

The cumulative setting conditions considered in this Draft EIR are based on:

- **Regional Growth Projections.** Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG) is an association of all the local governments within Butte County. Its members include the cities of Biggs, Chico, Gridley, and Oroville, the Town of Paradise, and the County of Butte. BCAG is responsible for developing federal and state transportation plans and programs that secure transportation funding for the region's highways, transit, streets and roads, as well as pedestrian and other transportation system improvements. Presented in **Table 4.0-2** and **4.0-3** are housing and population projections that BCAG anticipates within Butte County by the year 2030. County growth is anticipated to occur at an annual rate of 2 percent.
- **Local Adopted General Plans.** These are the existing land use plans in the region, consisting of the cities of Biggs, Gridley, and Oroville, the Town of Paradise, and Butte County. It should be noted that Butte County is currently in the process of updating its general plan (public draft released in 2009), which includes land use planning for some areas that are also addressed in the City of Chico's proposed General Plan Update. This Draft EIR cumulative setting and impact analysis acknowledges the Butte County general plan update process.
- **Large-Scale Development Projects.** This includes current large-scale proposed and approved development projects within Chico (see **Table 4.0-4**). It should be noted that this list is not intended to be all-inclusive of development activities in the city, but rather a general description of current development activities.
- **Effect of Regional Conditions.** The cumulative setting considers background traffic volumes and patterns on regional and state highways (e.g., State Route (SR) 99 and SR 32), background air quality conditions, and other associated environmental conditions that occur within the region, both inside and outside of the Planning Area.
- **Consideration of Existing Development Patterns.** The cumulative setting considers the current environmental conditions of existing development and past land use activities in the region. This includes major land use activities in the City of Chico and its associated SOI.

Each technical section of the Draft EIR includes a description of the cumulative setting's geographic extent based on the characteristics of the environmental issue under consideration as set forth in Section 15130(b) of the CEQA Guidelines. For some issues, such as air quality, this area is very large, often extending over county lines to other parts of Northern California.

**TABLE 4.0-2
HOUSING GROWTH ASSUMPTIONS
IN CITIES AND UNINCORPORATED BUTTE COUNTY (NOT INCLUDING CHICO)**

Jurisdiction	Housing Units							Percentage Increase 2006–2030	Average Annual Growth Rate
	2006	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	Total Increase 2006–2030		
Biggs	622	683	807	1,070	1,234	1,397	775	125%	5.2%
Gridley	2,224	2,703	3,417	4,039	4,459	4,923	2,699	121%	5.1%
Oroville	5,785	6,701	8,553	10,010	11,052	12,203	6,418	111%	4.6%
Paradise	12,707	13,223	14,105	14,751	15,427	16,134	3,427	27%	1.1%
Unincorporated	39,181	40,772	42,852	45,038	47,335	49,749	10,568	27%	1.1%

**TABLE 4.0-3
POPULATION GROWTH ASSUMPTIONS
IN CITIES AND UNINCORPORATED BUTTE COUNTY (NOT INCLUDING CHICO)**

Jurisdiction	Population							Percentage Increase 2006–2030	Average Annual Growth Rate
	2006	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	Total Increase 2006–2030		
Biggs	1,780	1,955	2,311	3,062	3,533	3,997	2,217	125%	5.2%
Gridley	5,949	7,231	9,141	10,804	11,928	13,170	7,221	121%	5.1%
Oroville	13,550	15,696	20,033	23,447	25,888	28,582	15,032	111%	4.6%
Paradise	26,516	27,592	29,433	30,781	32,192	33,667	7,151	27%	1.1%
Unincorporated	90,323	93,991	98,786	103,825	109,121	114,687	24,364	27%	1.1%

4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND ASSUMPTIONS USED

**TABLE 4.0-4
LARGE-SCALE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

Project Name	Project Description	Project Location	Status of Project
Belvedere Heights	192 residential units on 57.4 acres	East 20 th Street and Potter Road	Approved
Montecito Place	105 residential units on 14.5 acres	North Esplanade	Approved
Cambridge Village	203 residential units on 48 acres	SW corner of Bruce Road and E 20 th Street	Proposed
Schill Subdivision	152 residential units on 60 acres	SW Corner of Esplanade and Nord Hwy	Approved
Hillview Terrace	89 residential units on 27.1 acres	E 20 th St east of Bruce Road	Approved
Wildwood Estates	175 residential units on 32 acres	North Cactus Avenue	Approved
Oak Valley Phase I	295 residential units on 43 acres	Humboldt Road	Approved
Sycamore Glen	198 residential units on 87 acres	Eaton Road and Mariposa Avenue	Approved
Foothill Park East Ph 7	65 residential units on 19.1 acres	Marigold Avenue north of Eaton Road	Approved
Siena at Canyon Oaks	64 residential units on 40.1 acres	Canyon Oaks Parcels 4 & 5	Approved
Creekside Landing	350 residential units on 96.4 acres	Northerly terminus of Jones Avenue	Approved
Tuscan Village	155 residential units on 18.7 acres	Eaton Road and Burnap Avenue	Approved
Mountain Vista	211 residential units on 90 acres	Floral Avenue and Eaton Road	Approved
Lake Vista Phase III	55 residential units on 12.4 acres	Yosemite Drive and Idyllwild Circle	Approved
Sierra Gardens Townhomes	72 residential units on 6.5 acres	Sierra Sunrise Terrace and Idyllwild Circle	Approved
The Orchard	55 residential units on 21.4 acres	NW Chico south of Mud Creek	Approved
Shastan at Glenwood	57 residential units on 14.9 acres	1150 Glenwood Avenue	Approved
Christensen	33 residential units on 4.3 acres	2925 Godman Avenue	Proposed
Innsbrook Subdivision	87 residential units on 24.8 acres	Innsbrook Way	Approved
Westside Place	140 residential units on 20 acres	Nord Avenue north of 8 th Avenue	Approved
Meriam Park Phases 1-4, 9, 10	194 lots on 100 acres	E 20 th Street and Bruce Road	Proposed
Meriam Park Phases 5-7	200 residential units on 27 acres	E 20 th Street and Bruce Road	Approved
Enloe Expansion	190,000 square foot hospital expansion	Corner of W 5 th Avenue and Esplanade	Approved
Parkside Terrace	90 apartments	2161 Hartford Drive	Approved
Esplanade Village Phase I	144 apartments	101 Risa Way	Approved

Sources: City of Chico Planning Department, July 2009 and Updated January 2010

4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND ASSUMPTIONS USED

COMMON TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR uses the following terminology to describe the environmental effects of the proposed General Plan Update:

Less Than Significant Impact: A less than significant impact would cause no substantial change in the physical condition of the environment (no mitigation would be required for project effects found to be less than significant).

Significant Impact and Potentially Significant Impact: A significant impact would cause (or would potentially cause) a substantial adverse change in the physical conditions of the environment. Significant impacts are identified by the evaluation of project effects using specified standards of significance provided in each technical section of the DEIR. Identified significant impacts are those where the project would result in an impact that can be measured or quantified, while identified potentially significant impacts are those impacts where an exact measurement of the project's effects cannot be made but substantial evidence indicates that the impact would exceed standards of significance. A potentially significant impact may also be an impact that may or may not occur and where a definite determination cannot be foreseen. Mitigation measures and/or project alternatives are identified to avoid or reduce project effects to the environment to a less than significant level.

Significant and Unavoidable Impact: A significant and unavoidable impact would result in a substantial negative change in the environment that cannot be avoided or mitigated to a less than significant level if the project is implemented.

Less Than Cumulatively Considerable Impact: A less than cumulatively considerable impact would cause no substantial change in the physical condition of the environment under cumulative conditions.

Cumulatively Considerable Impact: A cumulatively considerable impact would result when the incremental effects of an individual project result in a significant adverse physical impact on the environment under cumulative conditions.

Proposed General Plan Update: The proposed General Plan Update is the proposed project and includes the policy document consisting of 13 chapters (12 elements), the Implementation Guide, and the Land Use Diagram. The proposed project is also referred to as the "Chico 2030 General Plan."

Planning Area: The proposed General Plan Planning Area includes all land within the City limits, land within the City's designated Sphere of Influence (SOI), and other land in unincorporated Butte County outside of these boundaries which, in the City's judgment, relates to the City's planning efforts. The actual Planning Area boundaries have not been changed from the currently adopted 1994 General Plan. The Chico Planning Area (Planning Area) consists of approximately 150 square miles of land located in the west-central portion of Butte County (**Figure 3.0-2**).

Standards of Significance: A set of significance criteria to determine at what level or "threshold" an impact would be considered significant. Significance criteria used in this EIR include the CEQA Guidelines; factual or scientific information; regulatory performance standards of local, state, and federal agencies; and City goals, objectives, and policies. Specified significance criteria used by the City of Chico are identified at the beginning of the impact analyses in each technical section of the DEIR.

4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND ASSUMPTIONS USED

Subsequent Projects/Activities: These are anticipated development projects (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial, or recreational projects) that could occur in the future as a result of the implementation of the proposed General Plan Update, due to the continuation and potential expansion of existing land use activities, or as a result of changes from the land use designations of the existing General Plan. These projects could include public infrastructure and utility extension projects including, but not limited to, roadway widenings and extensions, intersection improvements, and water, stormwater, wastewater distribution improvements, and private development and construction.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORTS UTILIZED IN THIS EIR

This Draft EIR utilizes technical information and analyses from previously prepared EIRs that are relevant to the consideration of environmental effects of the proposed General Plan Update, which is supported by the CEQA Guidelines (see Sections 15148 [Citation] and 15150 [Incorporation by Reference]). In addition to materials cited, the following EIRs have been utilized in this Draft EIR:

- Northwest Chico Specific Plan EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 2004082087)
- Costco Expansion EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 2005092058)
- Meriam Park EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 2005072045)

By utilizing provisions of the CEQA Guidelines, the City, in preparing this Draft EIR, has been able to make maximum feasible and appropriate use of the technical information in these EIRs. These EIRs and other referenced materials are available for review upon request at the City of Chico Planning Services Department at 411 Main Street, Chico, CA 95928.

4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND ASSUMPTIONS USED

REFERENCES

City of Chico, 2009 and 2010. City of Chico Planning Services Department. Development Project Status. July 2009 and updated January 2010.