

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The County of Ventura, Resource Management Agency, Planning Division (County) is currently developing the Ventura County 2040 General Plan Update (hereinafter referred to as the “2040 General Plan”). The 2040 General Plan includes goals, policies, and implementation programs that will guide the development of Ventura County through the year 2040.

This draft environmental impact report (EIR) was prepared to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with the implementation of the 2040 General Plan (State Clearinghouse Number 2019011026). This document is prepared in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.).

## 1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE GENERAL PLAN

The 2040 General Plan is a comprehensive effort to update the existing General Plan and respond to current local and regional conditions, as well as changes in state law that may not have been in place when the general plan was last updated in 2005. It clarifies and articulates the County’s intentions with respect to the rights and expectations of the various communities, including residents, property owners, and businesses. Through the 2040 General Plan, the County informs these groups of its goals, policies, and standards, thereby communicating expectations of the public and private sectors for meeting community objectives. In addition, the general plan includes Area Plans that specifically address growth and resource concerns within nine of the county’s identified communities.

Because the general plan and Area Plans are the basis for all future development in a local jurisdiction, any decision by a county affecting land use and development must be consistent with the respective plan. This includes any development projects proposed in the future. An action, program, or project is consistent with the general plan if, considering all its aspects, it will further the objectives and policies of the general plan and will not inhibit or obstruct their attainment (OPR 2017:255).

The 2040 General Plan is organized to satisfy the state’s required general plan elements (or chapters). It addresses the state’s mandatory elements (i.e., land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety), plus the new requirements for air quality and environmental justice, and three new optional elements: water, agriculture, and economic development. Each of the general plan elements and Area Plans contain goals, policies, and implementation programs, which constitute the County of Ventura’s policies for land use, development and environmental quality. These terms are defined as follows:

- ▶ **Goal**— A statement that describes in general terms a desired future condition or end state. Goals describe ideal future conditions for a topic and tend to be very general and broad.
- ▶ **Policy**— A clear and unambiguous statement that guides a specific course of action for decision-makers to achieve a desired goal.

- ▶ Implementation Program—An action, procedure, program, or technique that carries out general plan policy.

## 1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE CEQA PROCESS

### 1.2.1 Type and Use of This EIR

This EIR fulfills the requirements for a program EIR. Although the legally required contents of a program EIR are the same as those of a project EIR, program EIRs typically cover broad programs or large projects, such as a general plan, and contain a more general discussion of impacts, alternatives, and mitigation measures than a project EIR. Agencies generally prepare program EIRs for programs or a series of related actions that are linked geographically, are logical parts of a chain of contemplated events, rules, regulations, or plans that govern the conduct of a continuing program, or are individual activities carried out under the same authority and having generally similar environmental effects that can be mitigated in similar ways. By its nature, a program EIR considers the overall effects associated with implementing a program (such as a general plan) and does not, and is not intended to, examine individual projects that may be implemented pursuant to the general plan.

Once a program EIR has been prepared, subsequent activities within the program must be evaluated to determine if additional CEQA documentation is required to address the significant impacts of such activities. Subsequent activities could be found to be within the program EIR scope and additional environmental documents may not be required (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168[c]). When a program EIR is relied on for a subsequent activity, the lead agency must incorporate feasible mitigation measures and alternatives developed in the program EIR into the subsequent activities (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168[c][3]). If a subsequent activity could result in effects not within the scope of the program EIR, including new or more severe significant impacts than identified in the program EIR, the lead agency must prepare a negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration, or a project-level EIR. An initial study checklist is used to determine if a subsequent activity is within the scope of the program EIR and if not, what type of CEQA document is needed to address its effects.

As a program EIR, this document uses appropriately programmatic thresholds of significance as compared to the project-level thresholds that might be used for an EIR on a specific development project. Because the 2040 General Plan EIR is broad and general, it may not be ripe for consideration of environmental impacts that may occur on individual parcels or in connection with other projects that may be consistent with the 2040 General Plan. The process described above, initiated with preparation of an initial study, provides a road map for consideration of subsequent projects and the associated CEQA documentation.

## 1.3 SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THIS EIR

This chapter (1) provides an overview of the general plan; (2) summarizes the CEQA process; (3) summarizes the scope and content of the EIR; (4) lists lead, responsible, and trustee agencies for the EIR; and (5) provides a synopsis of the environmental review process required under CEQA. The contents of other EIR chapters are as follows:

- ▶ Chapter 2, “Executive Summary,” summarizes the conclusions of the draft EIR.
- ▶ Chapter 3, “Project Description,” provides a detailed discussion of the 2040 General Plan.
- ▶ Chapter 4, “Environmental Impact Analysis,” describes the potential environmental effects associated with implementation of the 2040 General Plan.
- ▶ Chapter 5, “Cumulative Impacts,” includes an analysis of the potential cumulative environmental effects associated with the 2040 General Plan for each of the resources analyzed in Chapter 4.
- ▶ Chapter 6, “Alternatives,” discusses alternatives to the 2040 General Plan, including the CEQA-required “no project” alternative.
- ▶ Chapter 7, “Other CEQA Considerations,” discusses issues such as growth inducement and significant irreversible environmental effects.
- ▶ Chapter 8, “References,” lists informational sources for the EIR.
- ▶ Chapter 9, “Report Preparers,” lists persons involved in the preparation of the document.

### 1.3.1 Notice of Preparation

A notice of preparation (NOP) of a draft EIR was circulated to the public on January 14, 2019, in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines. The NOP, included in Appendix A, indicated that the following issues would be further evaluated in the draft EIR:

- |                                     |                                  |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ▶ Aesthetics,                       | ▶ Land Use/Planning,             |
| ▶ Agriculture and Forest Resources, | ▶ Mineral Resources,             |
| ▶ Air Quality,                      | ▶ Noise,                         |
| ▶ Biological Resources,             | ▶ Population/Housing,            |
| ▶ Cultural Resources,               | ▶ Public Services,               |
| ▶ Energy,                           | ▶ Recreation,                    |
| ▶ Geology/Soils,                    | ▶ Transportation,                |
| ▶ Greenhouse Gas Emissions,         | ▶ Tribal Cultural Resources,     |
| ▶ Hazards/Hazardous Materials,      | ▶ Utilities/Service Systems, and |
| ▶ Hydrology/Water Quality,          | ▶ Wildfire.                      |

In response to the NOP, the County received 24 written comments. Oral and written comments were also received during the public scoping meeting on January 30, 2019. These comments are included in Appendix A and are addressed as appropriate in the analyses contained in the various sections of Chapter 4, “Environmental Impact Analysis.”

## AREAS OF KNOWN CONTROVERSY

Key areas of concern identified during the public outreach process through responses to the NOP and comments received at the January 2019 scoping meeting were focused on two primary areas of concern: (1) climate change and greenhouse gases, and (2) the effects of continued oil and gas extraction (including secondary effects related to climate change, air quality, water quality, water supply, traffic, noise, odors, aesthetics, and hazards).

Other concerns raised through scoping include the following:

- ▶ visual impacts on State Route (SR) 150 and SR 126;
- ▶ conservation of open space and scenic areas;
- ▶ pollution and health risks attributed to agricultural operations;
- ▶ concerns regarding endangered and threatened wildlife species;
- ▶ sensitive natural habitats including riparian and aquatic habitats;
- ▶ effects of development on wildlife movement corridors;
- ▶ concerns related to Native American tribal consultation regarding the preservation of tribal cultural resources pursuant to Assembly Bill 52 (2014) and Senate Bill 18 (2004);
- ▶ noise generated by airports, rail, and agriculture operations;
- ▶ concerns regarding groundwater infiltration, surface water quality, and flooding;
- ▶ affordable housing, adequate workforce housing, and consistency with the County's Regional Housing Needs Assessment;
- ▶ concerns regarding land use and zoning, conformance with the Guidelines for Orderly Development, and consistency with the Southern California Association of Governments Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy;
- ▶ equitable mobility options for people who are economically, socially, or physically disadvantaged;
- ▶ balancing analysis of both level of service (LOS) and vehicle miles traveled (VMT); and
- ▶ the need to actively promote walking, bicycling, and transit as alternatives to driving and a strategy to reduce VMT and greenhouse gas emissions.

## 1.4 LEAD, RESPONSIBLE, AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

The County of Ventura is the lead agency under CEQA for this EIR because it has discretionary authority to determine whether or how to approve the 2040 General Plan.

Responsible agencies are agencies other than the lead agency that have discretionary power over carrying out or implementing a specific component of the general plan or for approving a project (such as an annexation) that implements the goals and policies of the general plan. Agencies that may be responsible agencies include: the California Department of Transportation, which has responsibility for approving future improvements to the state highway system; the Department of Conservation, which has responsibility for approving mining Reclamation Plans pursuant to the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act; and the Local Agency Formation Commission of Ventura County, which has responsibility for approving any annexations within the county that might occur over the life of the 2040 General Plan.

Trustee agencies have jurisdiction over certain resources held in trust for the people of California but do not have legal authority over approving or carrying out the project. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is a trustee agency due to the potential impacts to biological resources, the California Department of Parks and Recreation is a trustee agency due to the presence of state parks in the county, and the California State Lands Commission would be a trustee agency if development were to occur on state-owned sovereign lands such as state schools or tide and submerged lands along the coast.

## 1.5 REVIEW OF THIS DRAFT EIR

Upon completion of this draft EIR, the County filed a notice of completion (NOC) with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to begin the public review period (Public Resources Code Section 21161). Concurrent with the NOC, this draft EIR has been distributed to responsible and trustee agencies, other affected agencies, surrounding counties, cities within the county, and interested parties, as well as to all parties requesting a copy of the draft EIR, in accordance with Public Resources Code Section 21092(b)(3).

During the 45-day public review period, the draft EIR, including the technical appendices, is available for review at the following locations:

- ▶ 2040 General Plan Update webpage at <https://vc2040.org/>;
- ▶ County of Ventura, Resource Management Agency, Planning Division Public Counter, 3<sup>d</sup> Floor, Hall of Administration, 800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura, CA, 93009, between the hours of 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday;
- ▶ The Planning Division website at <http://vcrma.org/divisions/planning> (select "CEQA Environmental Review").

Compact Disks of the Draft EIR have been provided to the following libraries:

- ▶ Albert H. Soliz Library (2820 Jordan Street, Oxnard, CA 93036);
- ▶ Avenue Library (606 North Ventura Ave., Ventura, CA 93001);

- ▶ E.P. Foster Library (651 East Main St., Ventura, CA 93001);
- ▶ Fillmore Library (502 2<sup>nd</sup> St., Fillmore, CA 93015);
- ▶ Hill Road Library (1070 S. Hill Rd., Ventura, CA 93003);
- ▶ Meiners Oaks Library (114 North Padre Juan, Ojai, CA 93023);
- ▶ Oak Park Library (899 North Kanan Rd., Oak Park, CA 91377);
- ▶ Oak View Library (555 Mahoney Ave., Oak View, CA 93022);
- ▶ Ojai Library (111 East Ojai Ave., Ojai, CA 93023);
- ▶ Piru Library (3811 Center St., Piru, CA 93040);
- ▶ Ray D. Prueter Library (510 Park Ave., Port Hueneme, CA 93041); and
- ▶ Saticoy Library (1292 Los Angeles Ave., Ventura CA 93004).

Agencies, organizations, and interested parties have the opportunity to comment on the draft EIR during the public review period. A public review draft of the 2040 General Plan will also be released concurrent with the draft EIR.

Written comments on this draft EIR should be addressed to:

Ventura County Resource Management Agency, Planning Division  
Attn: Susan Curtis, Manager, General Plan Update Section  
800 S. Victoria Avenue, L #1740  
Ventura, CA 93009-1740

Alternatively, you may email your comments to [GeneralPlanUpdate@ventura.org](mailto:GeneralPlanUpdate@ventura.org).

Upon completion of the public review and comment period, a final EIR will be prepared that will include both written and oral comments on the draft EIR received during the public-review period, responses to those comments, and any revisions to the draft EIR made to address public comments. The draft EIR and final EIR together will comprise the EIR for the 2040 General Plan. Before adopting the 2040 General Plan, the lead agency is required to certify that the EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, that the decision-making body reviewed and considered the information in the EIR, and that the EIR reflects the independent judgment of the lead agency.

Upon certification of an EIR, the lead agency makes a decision on the project analyzed in the EIR. A lead agency may: (a) disapprove a project because of its significant environmental effects; (b) require changes to a project to reduce or avoid significant environmental effects; or (c) approve a project despite its significant environmental effects, if the proper findings and statement of overriding considerations are adopted (State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15042 and 15043).

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In approving a project, for each significant impact of the project identified in the EIR, the lead or responsible agency must find, based on substantial evidence, that either: (a) the project has been changed to avoid or substantially reduce the magnitude of the impact; (b) changes to the project are within another agency's jurisdiction and such changes have or should be adopted; or (c) specific economic, social, or other considerations make the mitigation measures or project alternatives infeasible (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15091). Per Public Resources Code Section 21061.1, feasible means capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account, economic, environmental, legal, social, and technological factors.

If an agency approves a project with unavoidable significant environmental effects, it must prepare a written Statement of Overriding Considerations that sets forth the specific social, economic, or other reasons supporting the agency's decision and explains why the project's benefits outweigh the significant environmental effects (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15093).

When an agency makes findings on significant effects identified in the EIR, it must adopt a reporting or monitoring program for mitigation measures that were adopted or made conditions of project approval to mitigate significant effects (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15091[d]).

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