

8.0 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

PURPOSE

The *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines*¹ requires a discussion of the ways in which a project either could directly or indirectly foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing in the surrounding environment. Such a discussion should also include projects, which would remove obstacles to population growth, and the characteristics of a project, which may encourage or facilitate other activities that, either individually or cumulatively, could significantly affect the environment. CEQA emphasizes that growth in an area should not be considered beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance. The purpose of this discussion is to evaluate the growth-inducing potential and impact of the proposed project.

8.1 SUMMARY OF 2030 GENERAL PLAN EIR FINDINGS

Buildout of the General Plan and associated implementation programs, and in particular, the economic development initiatives, and the Enterprise Zone authorization, would have growth inducing impacts in the southern parts of Tulare County, which may be mitigated in part by the County's Growth Management Program.

Indirect growth-inducing impacts, such as those associated with job increases within the City's that might affect housing and retail demand in other jurisdictions over an extended period, are difficult to assess with precision, since future economic and population trends may be influenced by unforeseeable events, such as natural disasters and business and development cycles. Moreover, long-term changes in economic and population growth are often regional in scope; they are not influenced solely by changes of policies and economic development programs in Porterville. Business trends are influenced by economic conditions throughout the state and country, as well as around the world. Despite these limitations on the analysis, it is still possible to assess the general potential growth-inducing impacts of the proposed General Plan.

As the employment base in Tulare County continues to increase, more population may be drawn to the City of Porterville who work in other nearby cities, as people grow more comfortable with living further from their place of work. As a result, housing demand may increase in both the City of Porterville and other adjacent areas. The City's recently adopted Housing Element, which has been certified by the State Department of Housing and Community Development includes programs to address regional housing

¹ California Public Resources Code, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, *California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines*, Sections 15126(g) and 15126.2(d).

needs of the near term, and subsequent revisions will extend, modify, or add to these programs as needed to continue to respond to the City's "fair share" of regional housing needs, as required by law.

A city's jobs/employment ratio (jobs to employed residents) would be 1:1 if the number of jobs in the city equaled the number of employed residents. In theory, such a balance would eliminate the need for commuting. More realistically, a balance means that in-commuting and out-commuting are matched, leading to efficient use of the transportation system, particularly during peak hours. The current jobs/employment ratio in Porterville is 0.96, which means that the number of jobs in the City is lower than the number of employed residents by about 4 percent. The proposed General Plan will add more jobs than the No Project Alternative, making the City "job rich." This may affect regional housing demand.

8.2 GROWTH-INDUCEMENT POTENTIAL

In general terms, a project may foster population growth in a geographic area if it meets any of the criteria identified below.²

- The project removes an obstacle to growth (e.g., the establishment of an essential public service, the provision of new access to an area, or a change in zoning or general plan designation).
- The project results in the urbanization of land in a remote location (leapfrog development).
- Economic expansion or growth occurs in an area in response to the project (e.g., changes in revenue base, employment expansion).

Should a project meet any of these criteria, it can be considered growth inducing. An evaluation of the project vis-à-vis these criteria are provided below.

8.2.1 Removal of an Obstacle to Growth

Growth in an area may result from the removal of physical obstacles or restrictions to growth, as well as the removal of planning impediments resulting from land use plans and policies. In this context, physical growth impediments may include nonexistent or inadequate access to an area or the lack of essential public services (e.g., water service), while planning impediments may include a restrictive zoning and/or general plan designation. The project is located in an urban area and on a site that is designated for retail commercial uses by the *Porterville 2030 General Plan*.³ In addition, the site is adjacent to the Riverwalk Marketplace Phase I commercial project and is located at the intersection of State Route (SR) 65 and

² California Public Resources Code, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, *California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines*, Sections 15126(g) and 15126.2(d).

³ City of Porterville, *2030 General Plan*, Chapter 2, "Land Use Element," Figure 2-2, "General Plan Land Use Designations."

SR-190. Consequently, project approval would not require the amendment to the general plan or zoning code that could represent removal of a planning impediment to growth.

In addition, the site is served by an established transportation network, which affords the property both local and regional access. East-west access to the property is provided via SR-190, which abuts the southern project boundary, while SR-65 provides regional north-south access. While the project would require roadway improvements to enhance traffic flow, the project does not require the construction of new roadways that would remove or lessen physical impediments caused by a lack of access to outlying areas, thereby making it easier to develop such areas with urban uses. In addition, the lands directly surrounding the project site already contain developed uses.

The extension of water and sanitary sewer lines required to support buildout of the project, has already been performed with the development of the adjacent Riverwalk Marketplace Phase I. The project site is located adjacent to existing and planned development, and municipal infrastructure presently exists in the immediate vicinity. Project infrastructure would connect to the existing municipal infrastructure that was installed as part of the Riverwalk Marketplace Phase I project. A sanitary sewer system consisting of 6-inch-diameter pipes would connect to an existing 18-inch trunk found in Springville Avenue. Trunk sewers convey wastewater to the Porterville Wastewater Treatment Facility. The existing 18-inch sewer trunk would have adequate capacity to accommodate the proposed project's wastewater conveyance needs.⁴ The applicant proposes to connect with the existing utility infrastructure found in the Springville Avenue right-of-way for water supply.

Consequently, the project would not remove a physical impediment to growth through expansion or construction of new infrastructure to outlying areas.

8.2.2 Urbanization of Land in Isolated Localities (Leapfrog Development)

Development can be considered growth inducing when it requires the extension of urban infrastructure into isolated localities that are void of such facilities. The site is situated in a developed area that is designated for retail commercial use by the 2030 General Plan. Surrounding land uses include medium- and low-medium-density residential to the north, existing commercial to the east, general and service commercial uses to the south beyond SR-190, and more low-medium-density residential uses to the west opposite Indiana Street. The project site is not located on the fringe of the City and, given its location relative to major transportation routes SR-65 and SR-190, would not be characterized as a leapfrog development. Given this, the project would not induce growth under this criterion, as it cannot result in the urbanization of land in an isolated locality.

⁴ Personal communication with Benjamin Kimball, City Planner, City of Porterville, February 5, 2009.

8.2.3 Economic Growth

The final criterion by which growth inducement can be measured involves economic considerations. The proposed project is commercial in nature and planned for land designated as a retail commercial center by the 2030 General Plan.⁵ In addition, the surrounding properties are already developed. Consequently, site development would not significantly increase surrounding land values and make development of adjacent properties financially attractive.

The proposed project would stimulate economic growth in the area through direct employment as well as indirectly through encouraging employment growth among suppliers and service providers that would serve the proposed project. The City is in an area that is not meeting its full potential for economic activity, as there is a projected need for retail space. However, the grocery portion of the proposed project may create an impact on existing grocery sales in the City.⁶ In addition, the project's property tax and sales tax revenues paid to the City would enable expenditures on capital improvement projects, which would have the potential to further increase employment, as well as provide further infrastructure improvements that would allow for further growth within the City's planning area.

8.2.4 Population and Housing Growth

The adjacent surrounding area is developed with residential and commercial land uses that are supported by all necessary municipal services. The proposed project does not include residential units, nor does it require the construction of new roadways that would make it easier to develop such areas with residential uses that would induce further population and housing growth. The employment and economic opportunities offered by the proposed project could cause additional population growth and housing demand, as some employees may relocate to the Porterville area. However, by 2030 the City is projected to add 9,525 new households.⁷ It is likely that most employees hired by the proposed project would already reside within the City. For a conservative estimate, if all 300 employees projected to be hired by the proposed project relocated to the City, and each employee represented one household, an additional 300 new households would be added to the City, which is well within the general plan's projected households for the year 2030.⁸ As the proposed project does not include residential units, it would not cause substantial housing or population growth.

⁵ City of Porterville, *2030 General Plan*, Chapter 2, "Land Use Element," Figure 2-2, "General Plan Land Use Designations."

⁶ Natelson Dale Group, Inc., *Retail Market Impact Analysis for Porterville Walmart Supercenter*, 2009.

⁷ City of Porterville, *2030 General Plan*, Chapter 2, "Land Use Element," Table 2-3.

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8.3 IMPACTS CREATED BY GROWTH

Attempting to determine the environmental impacts created by growth is speculative in that the size, type, and location of specific future projects that may be induced by the project are unknown at the present time. Furthermore, it is presumptuous to state conclusively that implementation of the project would induce growth in the surrounding area, as there are many variables that must be considered when examining the mechanics of urban growth (e.g., market forces, demographic trends). Impacts associated with any future development project that could be influenced by the Riverwalk Marketplace Phase II project's development would be examined in depth during the environmental review conducted for the project as part of its review and approval process. Therefore, the project would not result in significant growth-inducing impacts.

Impacts of growth associated with buildout of the project can be found in the cumulative analysis for each topic that was discussed in **Section 5.0, Environmental Analysis**. Impacts identified in the cumulative analyses include, but are not limited to; increased vehicle traffic and vehicle exhaust emissions, increased noise levels, and growth in the demand for services and utilities, and are incorporated herein by reference.