

Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

P P P

A. Purpose of the EIR

In compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) describes the environmental consequences of the *Draft General Plan: A Guide for Public Decision-Making*¹ (*Draft General Plan*). The EIR assumes full realization of the *Draft General Plan*'s policies through Plan buildout to the year 2020. This EIR is designed to fully inform City planning staff, the Planning Commission, City Council, other responsible agencies, and the general public of the proposed project and the potential consequences of *Draft General Plan* approval. The EIR also examines various alternatives to the proposed project and recommends a set of mitigation measures to reduce or avoid potentially significant impacts.

This EIR is a Program EIR. The *CEQA Guidelines* state that A...a Program EIR may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related geographically, as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions, in connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program or as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways.² This Program EIR identifies general effects of the *Draft General Plan*. It is assumed that individual development projects in the proposed Plan area would receive project specific environmental evaluation, as necessary, during the project approval process.

B. Proposed Project

¹ City of Berkeley, 2000, *Draft General Plan: A Guide for Public Decision-Making*. Berkeley. October.

² *CEQA Guidelines*, 1998, Section 15168.

The proposed project is the *Draft General Plan*, which is a comprehensive update of the 1977 City of Berkeley *Master Plan*, the principal policy document for guiding future development of the City, as well as the 1980 Economic Development Element and the 1990 Housing Element. The *Draft General Plan* is intended to be the foundation upon which future land use and capital improvement decisions will be based, and it will supersede the 1977 *Master Plan*, 1990 *Housing Element* and 1980 *Economic Development Element*. The *Draft General Plan* is also designed to work in concert with the City's detailed area plans, which have been adopted by the City as amendments to the 1977 *Master Plan*.³

C. General Plan Update Process

The General Plan update process was initiated by the City when City staff and an interdisciplinary team of experts began compiling baseline data in 1992 to inform the *Draft General Plan*. In 1993, the City of Berkeley published *Conditions, Trends and Issues*, a 500-page report compiling this baseline information, which also serves as a technical appendix to the *Draft General Plan*.

The first *Draft General Plan* was released in May 1999. Public comments were taken on the first *Draft General Plan* in May, June and July 1999. A second *Draft General Plan* that incorporated the comments on the first *Draft General Plan* was released in October 1999 for consideration by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission then held seven public workshops from November 1999 through June 2000. Each Planning Commission workshop focused on one or two of the Plan elements. On October 4, 2000, the Planning Commission released the third *Draft General Plan*. The third Planning Commission *Draft General Plan* is the subject of this EIR. Public comments on the *Draft General Plan* will be considered by the Planning Commission, which will then direct staff to modify and forward the *Draft General Plan* to the City Council for consideration and adoption in May 2001.

D. EIR Scope

The City of Berkeley circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to help identify the types of impacts that could result from the proposed *Draft General Plan* update, as well as potential areas of controversy. The NOP was published on October 17, 2000. The NOP was mailed to public agencies and organizations considered likely to be interested in the potential impacts of the project. Additionally, a scoping session was held on

³ Recent examples of these detailed area plans include the *Downtown Plan*, *University Avenue Strategic Plan*, and *Waterfront Plan*.

November 8, 2000 to identify areas of environmental concern to be addressed in the EIR. The public scoping session was noticed pursuant to the City's public noticing requirements. Comments received by the City on the NOP and at the public scoping session were taken into account during the preparation of the Draft EIR. The NOP, written comments, and the distribution list are provided in Appendix A.

This Draft EIR focuses on the areas of concern identified in the NOP and comments received on the NOP and at the public scoping session. The following environmental issues are addressed in this EIR:

- A. Land Use
- B. Population, Employment and Housing
- C. Community Services
- D. Transportation
- E. Infrastructure
- F. Urban Design and Visual Quality
- G. Cultural Resources
- H. Open Space and Recreation
- I. Geologic and Seismic Hazards
- J. Hydrology and Water Quality
- K. Natural Resources
- L. Air Quality
- M. Noise
- N. Hazardous Materials

E. Report Organization

This EIR is organized into the following chapters:

- § *Chapter I B Introduction*, provides a summary of the proposed action and environmental review process; identifies potentially significant issues and concerns; and discusses the overall purpose, use, and organization of the EIR.
- § *Chapter II B Summary*, provides a summary of the significant impacts that would result from implementation of the proposed *Draft General Plan* and describes mitigation measures recommended to reduce or avoid significant impacts.
- § *Chapter III B Project Description*, provides a description of the *Draft General Plan*.
- § *Chapter IV B Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, describes for each environmental technical topic: existing conditions (setting); potential environmental impacts and their level of significance; and mitigation measures

recommended to mitigate identified impacts. Potential impacts are identified by levels of significance, as follows:

- SU: Significant and Unavoidable;
- S: Significant;
- PS: Potentially Significant; and
- LTS: Less than Significant.

Each impact is categorized before and after implementation of any recommended mitigation measure(s).

§ *Chapter V B Alternatives*, provides an evaluation of two alternative development scenarios to the proposed *Draft General Plan*, in addition to the CEQA-Required No Project alternative. The following alternatives are also considered in this chapter:

B The No Growth alternative, which assumes that the City is completely built out and there would be no net increase in residential units, employment or commercial uses.

B The Increased Development alternative, which assumes that the allowable floor area ratios (FARs) and building heights would be increased in the Downtown and along the major transit corridors to allow significantly more development.

§ *Chapter VI B CEQA-Required Assessment Conclusions*, provides the required analysis of the overall impacts of the proposed project, including: effects found not to be significant; growth-inducing impacts; the relationship between short-term uses of the environment and the enhancement of long-term productivity; significant irreversible and unavoidable impacts; and cumulative impacts for the environmental issues found to have significant cumulative effects.

§ *Chapter VII B Report Preparation*, identifies the reference documents, publications, and literature reviewed and cited, and provides a summary of those involved in report preparation.