

Chapter VI
CEQA-REQUIRED ASSESSMENT CONCLUSIONS

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As required by CEQA, this chapter presents discussions related to growth inducement; significant irreversible changes; cumulative impacts; effects found not to be significant; unavoidable significant effects; and the relationship between short-term and long-term uses of the environment. The focus of this chapter is on the policies of the *Draft General Plan* and the growth it envisions. The construction and development of subsequent development projects could have project-specific impacts which would be addressed, as appropriate, on a project-by-project basis pursuant to CEQA.

A. Growth Inducement

A project is considered growth-inducing if it would directly or indirectly foster economic or population growth or the construction of additional housing, if it would remove obstacles to population growth or tax community service facilities to the extent that the construction of new facilities would be necessary, or if it would encourage or facilitate other activities that cause significant environmental effects.¹ Because this document is a first-tier (i.e., program level) EIR on the *Draft General Plan*, which will guide future development in the City, it is an especially important place to assess potential growth-inducement.

The *Draft General Plan* would directly induce population, employment and economic growth with the proposed increase in housing and employment throughout the City, but especially in the Downtown and commercial districts. The *Draft General Plan* would result in the following growth patterns:

- § Under buildout conditions in 2020, the *Draft General Plan* would add 6,955 new residents compared to the existing 2000 population, and an additional 5,518 people when compared to 2020 ABAG projections.

¹ *CEQA Guidelines*, 2000, Section 15126.2(d).

- \$ Under buildout conditions in 2020, the *Draft General Plan* would add 3,176 households compared to the existing number of units in 2000, and an additional 2,276 households when compared to 2020 ABAG projections.
- \$ Under buildout conditions in 2020, the *Draft General Plan* would add 3,735 new jobs compared to the projected number of jobs in 2000.

This population, housing and employment growth in the City would generally have beneficial effects by helping the City come closer to attaining its regional fair-share housing obligations which would also improve the City's jobs/housing balance. The *Draft General Plan* encourages this new growth in areas of the City that are served by transit and urban services, but mostly built-out. Development in these areas would consist of infill development on the few remaining vacant sites or redevelopment of already built-out sites.

The growth-inducing effects of the *Draft General Plan*, while measurable, are intended to implement several strategies of the Plan, including:

- \$ Protection of the environment, both locally and regionally;
- \$ Improving transportation access, service and use for all modes, locally and regionally;
- \$ Increasing the housing supply in Berkeley; and
- \$ Promoting regional solutions to regional problems.

These strategies would be directly implemented through the type of residential growth and transit-oriented development envisioned by the *Draft General Plan*.

In addition, the type of growth envisioned by the *Draft General Plan* implements the tenets of smart growth that include clustering of development at the urban core close to transit hubs and along transit corridors. In light of recent and projected growth patterns in the greater San Francisco Bay Area, economic growth will continue to occur and be expressed as proposals for physical development somewhere in the region. The growth envisioned by the *Draft General Plan* would accommodate some of the regional demand for additional residential units and employment, and result in regional benefits by creating growth that encourages less dependence on the automobile, which would have regional traffic and air quality benefits. This type of growth clustered at the urban core and along transit corridors also helps to preserve open space and agricultural lands at the urban fringe by creating infill development or redevelopment in areas that have already been developed. Therefore, the growth-inducing effects of implementation of the *Draft General Plan* would result in a net benefit, both to the City of Berkeley and to the region as a whole.

B. Significant Irreversible Changes

An EIR must identify any significant irreversible environmental changes which would be caused by the proposed project. Irreversible environmental changes may include current or future commitments to using non-renewable resources, secondary or growth-inducing impacts that commit future generations to similar uses. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.² The CEQA guidelines describe three distinct categories of significant irreversible changes that should be considered, as further detailed below.

1. Changes in Land Use Which Would Commit Future Generations

While the *Draft General Plan* would allow for growth in the Downtown and other parts of the City, as noted under growth-inducement above, this increased development would occur as infill or as redevelopment of urbanized sites that have been previously developed. In addition, the land use designations in the *Draft General Plan* reflect the land uses that currently exist in the City. Therefore, since the land use changes proposed in the *Draft General Plan* would be minimal, and the amount of vacant land that would become developed would be minimal, changes in land use which would commit future generations would not constitute a substantial change.

2. Irreversible Changes from Environmental Actions

Irreversible changes to the physical environment could occur from accidental release of hazardous materials that could be associated with development. However, compliance with hazardous materials regulations and policies, as outlined in Chapter IV, Section N, is expected to maintain this potential impact as less-than-significant. No other irreversible changes would result from the adoption and implementation of the *Draft General Plan*.

3. Consumption of Nonrenewable Resources

Consumption of nonrenewable resources includes increased energy consumption, conversion of agricultural lands, and lost access to mining reserves. No agricultural lands would be converted and no access to mining reserves would be lost with implementation of the *Draft General Plan*. Additional development proposed in the *Draft General Plan* would require additional energy of several types. However, as discussed in Section E, Infrastructure, of Chapter IV of this EIR, because new development allowed under the Plan would be increased density urban infill development, it would not require the construction of major new lines for these services, and PG&E anticipates being able to provide the capacity to serve this additional development.

² *CEQA Guidelines*, 2000, Section 15126.2(c)

C. Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are two or more individual impacts that, when considered together, are considerable or that compound or increase other environmental impacts. The cumulative impact of several projects is the change in the environment that results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other, closely related past, present or reasonably foreseeable, probable future projects. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time.³

The cumulative impacts of a General Plan take into account growth projected by the Plan, in combination with impacts from projected growth in other cities in the region. This analysis examines cumulative effects of the policies of the *Draft General Plan*, in combination with ABAG projected growth for the other cities in the urbanized East Bay counties of Alameda and Contra Costa.

The potential cumulative effects of the *Draft General Plan* are summarized below.

1. Land Use

The overall changes in land use that would occur with implementation of the *Draft General Plan* would be minimal. Therefore, no cumulative effect on land use would occur with the proposed project in combination with other reasonably foreseeable projects in the urbanized Bay Area. Even so, to the extent that other inner Bay Area communities encourage in-fill development of the type envisioned by the *Draft General Plan*, the environmental effects would be beneficial in the aggregate. No mitigation would be required.

2. Population, Employment and Housing

The *Draft General Plan* envisions building approximately 3,340 new housing units over the buildout period until the year 2020. Addition of these new housing units, which would accommodate 3,176 new households, would not contribute to escalating regional housing shortages. In this way, the proposed *Draft General Plan* would not create a cumulative impact to population and housing, since all proposed new residents would be accommodated by an equivalent number of housing units. In addition, as outlined in Section B, Population, Housing and Employment, of Chapter IV of this EIR, the proposed project would create more employment along with more housing, which would

³ *CEQA Guidelines*, 2000, Section 15355.

help decrease the jobs/housing imbalance in the City. This reduction in the local jobs housing balance would also have regional benefits. No mitigation would be necessary.

3. Community Services

Projections for provision of public and community services take into account citywide growth scenarios. Therefore, no additional citywide cumulative impacts (beyond those identified in the body of this report) are anticipated.

Some cumulative effects could still occur related to community services when the City is considered in a regional context. For example, if the City of Berkeley is projecting an increase in population, and local landfills are already at capacity, this would constitute a significant cumulative impact if other cities in the region were projecting similar growth. However, as noted in the Infrastructure analysis, because the City is currently diverting close to 50 percent of its waste stream and anticipates bringing waste stream diversion up to over 60 percent, and regional landfill locations have adequate remaining capacity, no cumulative impacts to solid waste would result from *Plan* implementation.

Because the City of Berkeley participates in a Mutual Aid Agreement for fire protection with neighboring jurisdictions, the population growth anticipated by the *Draft General Plan* could have potential cumulative impacts on Fire Services on a regional level. However, all jurisdictions participating in the Mutual Aid Agreement would anticipate growth over the buildout period of the *Draft General Plan*, and that growth would be accommodated by the agreement. Therefore, the City's cumulative contribution to regional fire protection services impacts would be less than significant.

4. Transportation

The transportation analysis in Section D, Transportation, of Chapter IV of this EIR takes cumulative and future conditions into account. No additional cumulative transportation impacts, other than those identified in Section IV.D, would be anticipated.

5. Infrastructure

As noted under community services above, projections for provision of public and community services take into account citywide growth scenarios. Some cumulative effects could still occur related to wastewater when the City is considered in a regional context, as discussed below under 10, Hydrology and Water Quality.

6. Urban Design and Visual Quality

The changes in visual quality in the City would be minimal with *Draft General Plan* implementation, with the exception of the Downtown and commercial corridors which could experience more dense development than currently exists. However, because the City is almost completely built-out, and these areas are in the central portions of the City and would not be highly visible from neighboring cities, no significant cumulative visual effects would occur with *Plan* implementation. No mitigation would be necessary.

7. Cultural Resources

Because the City of Berkeley's plans, policies and programs emphasize historic preservation, no loss of historic resources would be anticipated with *Draft General Plan* implementation. Proposed new development would not contribute to any cumulative regional loss of historic resources. State-mandated mitigations and policies in place to address and prevent impacts to archaeological and cultural resources would prevent any cumulative impacts if resources are uncovered. No mitigation would be necessary.

8. Open Space and Recreation

No open space or recreational facilities are proposed for removal with implementation of the *Draft General Plan*, and several new facilities are in the planning stages, i.e., Eastshore State Park and Harrison Park. Therefore, no cumulative impacts to open space and recreation would occur. No mitigation would be necessary.

9. Geologic and Seismic Hazards

Because geologic conditions are highly localized, implementation of the *Draft General Plan* would not result in cumulative geologic impacts. However, the proposed increase in population in a seismically-active area with development already occurring directly on fault lines could be seen as cumulatively contributing to regional seismic hazards. As noted in the Section I of Chapter IV, development in active seismic areas such as the Bay Area results in a potentially significant seismic hazard impact. Increased population in the City of Berkeley would also cumulatively contribute to the region's ability to recover from a major seismic event. However, policies and actions in the *Draft General Plan* have been identified to address this cumulative impact.

10. Hydrology and Water Quality

Because the City continues to release stormwater runoff and treated wastewater into the San Francisco Bay, in combination with other cities who release runoff into the Bay, this would constitute a significant cumulative effect. Each jurisdiction that discharges into the Bay must obtain a NPDES permit, which is overseen by the RWQCB. Although discharges into the Bay are overseen by the RWQCB, however, a cumulative decrease in water quality still occurs over time. The policies in the *Draft General Plan* and

programs described in Section IV.J, Hydrology and Water Quality, relative to water quality in the Bay were crafted to address these regional water quality issues, as demonstrated by the improvement in water quality in the Bay since the 1977 *Master Plan*. These City policies and programs will contribute to the continuing mitigation and alleviation of this cumulative water quality impact.

11. Natural Resources

No undeveloped, natural land is proposed to be developed as part of the *Draft General Plan*. Therefore, the *Draft General Plan* would not contribute to a regional cumulative loss of habitat or natural resources.

12. Air Quality

The *Draft General Plan* allows for additional development in the most urbanized areas of the City, including the Downtown and commercial districts. This development is intended to be transit-oriented, centered around major local and regional transit nodes. As discussed in the Air Quality section in Chapter IV of this EIR, this type of transit-oriented development would ultimately help achieve regional air quality goals, thus resulting in a cumulative air quality benefit.

13. Noise

With adoption of land use compatibility guidelines into the *Draft General Plan*, no significant noise impacts are anticipated with plan implementation. Less-than-significant noise impacts related to stationary and non-stationary sources would be localized in nature, and would therefore not contribute to any cumulative noise impacts.

14. Hazardous Materials

An increase in local population and employment would result in the increased use of hazardous household, commercial and industrial materials. These increases would contribute cumulatively to the chance of accidental exposure to hazardous materials, as well as hazardous materials disposal sites. However, these increases would be incremental, and would not be considered to cause a significant cumulative effect.

D. Effects Found Not to be Significant

All CEQA-defined environmental factors were found to have potentially significant impacts except for agricultural resources and mineral resources. No agricultural resources are located in the City of Berkeley, except for community gardens, none of

which are proposed for removal. There are no known mineral resources in the City of Berkeley. Therefore, the proposed *Draft General Plan* would not have an effect on agricultural or mineral resources.

E. Unavoidable Significant Effects

As discussed in Chapter IV of this EIR, two significant unavoidable impacts are anticipated with full buildout of the *Draft General Plan* in the following topical area:

- § *Transportation.* Relative to existing conditions, the *Draft General Plan* would produce significant impacts on ten Berkeley street segments in the year 2005, and would produce significant impacts on 26 Berkeley street segments in the year 2020. Mitigation measures have been identified to reduce the future impacts to Berkeley street segments; however, because congestion levels on these roadway segments are in many cases either already near capacity or are projected to be near capacity under the 1977 *Master Plan* (the No Project Alternative), the effects of these mitigation measures would not necessarily completely eliminate the impacts. However, even if growth in Berkeley were held constant, new growth in adjacent communities and the region would trigger significant impacts on most of the same street segments that are part of the Congestion Management Plan Designated Network and the Metropolitan Transportation System (see section D. Transportation). Nevertheless, this impact would be considered significant and unavoidable.
- § *Air Quality.* The population and employment projections embodied in the *Draft General Plan* are not consistent with the latest Association of Bay Area Government (ABAG) projections, which were the source of information on households and employment used in the *97 Bay Area Clean Air Plan*. The project is therefore inconsistent with the population and employment assumptions included in the current regional Clean Air Plan (CAP). Because the project does not meet all criteria for consistency with the regional air quality plan, regional air quality impacts of the project would be considered to be significant, even though: (1) the *Draft General Plan* is supportive of regional air quality improvement methods, and (2) the type of development envisioned by the Plan B infill development near local and regional transit nodes B would be beneficial in regional terms. However, this impact is purely technical, based on the inputs used by ABAG which are provided by the City, and would be short-term in nature, since future ABAG Projections would likely be revised to incorporate the higher population and employment figures projected in the *Draft General Plan*.⁴

⁴ ABAG projections are released every two years to be consistent with population and employment trends, as well as current planning documents, including cities-revised General Plans.

Nevertheless, this impact would be considered a significant unavoidable short-term impact.

F. Relationship Between Short-Term Versus Long-Term Uses of the Environment

As outlined in Chapter IV in this EIR, implementation of the *Draft General Plan* would result in significant impacts in the following areas:

- \$ Land Use;
- \$ Population, Employment and Housing;
- \$ Community Services;
- \$ Transportation;
- \$ Infrastructure;
- \$ Urban Design and Visual Quality;
- \$ Geologic and Seismic Hazards;
- \$ Hydrology and Water Quality;
- \$ Natural Resources;
- \$ Air Quality; and
- \$ Hazardous Materials.

Most of these environmental impacts can be mitigated with the measures outlined in this report. The long-term effect of the *Draft General Plan* is to provide direction and guidance for future development in the City. The *Draft General Plan* is intended to be sensitive to current regional and environmental issues and legislation and to implement the community's vision for the City.

As noted above, the land use changes proposed in the *Draft General Plan* are minimal compared with existing conditions. In addition, because the City of Berkeley is almost completely built out, all future growth envisioned by the *Draft General Plan* would occur as infill or redevelopment. Therefore, the only long-term uses of the environment in areas proposed for development would also be urban uses. Short-term visions for increased development in the City's urban core would not affect the long-term productivity of these areas.