

FINAL
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
FOR THE
MIDDLE GREEN VALLEY SPECIFIC PLAN

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE #2009062048

RESPONSES TO COMMENTS ON AND
REVISIONS TO THE DRAFT EIR

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DRAFT EIR AND FINAL EIR

In conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (2010), section 15132 (Contents of Final Environmental Impact Report), the Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) for the proposed Middle Green Valley specific Plan consists of two volumes: (1) the December 2009 Draft EIR, which was distributed for public review and comment and delivered to the State Clearinghouse on December 28, 2009; and (2) this April 2010 Final EIR document, which incorporates the Draft EIR by this reference, and includes **responses to comments** received by the Lead Agency (the County of Solano) during and immediately after the public review period on the Draft EIR, plus a set of **revisions made to the Draft EIR** in response to the comments received. The responses to comments are included in section 2 of this document. The revisions to the Draft EIR are included in section 3. None of the revisions to the Draft EIR included in section 3 represents a substantial increase in the severity of an identified significant impact or the identification of a new significant impact, mitigation, or alternative considerably different from those already considered in preparing the Draft EIR.

Certification of this Final EIR by the Solano County Board of Supervisors must occur prior to adoption of the Middle Green Valley Specific Plan.

1.2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Pursuant to 2008 Solano County General Plan objectives, the County of Solano is proposing to adopt and implement a Middle Green Valley Specific Plan. The project, as articulated in the *Preliminary Draft Middle Green Valley Specific Plan*, December 21, 2009 (Draft Specific Plan), is intended to carry out the goals and policies identified by the Solano County 2008 General Plan for the approximately 1,905-acre Middle Green Valley "special study area."

(1) Existing Plan Area. The "special study area" approximately 1,905-acre plan area is located north of the Fairfield City limits along Green Valley Road, and at the east edge of the western hills. The plan area is comprised of a valley floor, with two drainage corridors--Green Valley Creek and Hennessey Creek, surrounded by foothills including steep slope areas and oak woodland. The plan area includes grazing lands in the hills, a mixture of cultivated and cultivable agricultural land on the valley floor, over 200 acres of vineyard, and a number of existing rural building and infrastructure elements.

The plan area is located between existing suburban residential developments in the unincorporated upper Green Valley to the north and incorporated City of Fairfield immediately to the south and southeast. The plan area is highly valued for its rural character and scenic qualities.

(2) General Plan Background. The General Plan-stated goal for the area is to maintain the rural character of the valley while allowing some opportunity for compatible residential

development. The General Plan calls for use of land use tools such as clustering and transfer of development rights to limit the effects of residential development on the rural character of the valley, including the valley's viewsheds, wildlife habitat, wildlife movement corridors and agricultural activities. The General Plan calls for adoption of a plan (either a specific plan or master plan) for Middle Green Valley that would implement these objectives.

(3) Proposed Specific Plan. In response to these General Plan objectives, the Draft Specific Plan would establish a land use and circulation layout, and associated land use tools such as development clustering, a transfer of development rights (TDR) program, and use of conservation easements, to limit the effects of residential development on the rural character of the valley, and on the valley's viewsheds, wildlife habitat, wildlife movement corridors, and agricultural activities.

(a) Plan Vision. The Draft Specific Plan includes a described "vision" and set of proposed principals, goals, concepts, neighborhood framework, and associated land use and character policies, land use designations, related use standards, building types standards, financial and infrastructure implementation provisions, community design themes, neighborhood design code provisions; building type, form and character standards; landscape standards; open land requirements; street and circulation standards; sign standards; and design review guidelines for the Middle Green Valley plan area formulated to implement the General Plan objectives.

The Specific Plan proposes an interwoven combination of land conservation and development provisions designed to create a limited number of new residential units, "capped" at a maximum of 400 new primary residential units (consistent with General Plan stated objectives for the plan area) and up to 100 new secondary residential units, in compact cluster development patterns surrounded by an interconnected network of agricultural and natural open lands, and served by a circulation system of rural streets, bikeways, pedestrian pathways and trails.

Approximately 1,490 acres (about 78 percent) of the plan area is designated as permanent open land, of which approximately 440 acres would be preserved as working agriculture. Approximately 23 percent of the planning area is designated for development, in a "neighborhood framework," with each of four proposed neighborhood areas having a designated informal pattern of rural roads, residential building types, and community buildings.

(b) Water and Sewer. The plan proposes two basic options for providing water and wastewater services to the neighborhood development areas: (a) connecting the development areas to existing urban service systems in the vicinity (i.e., the City of Fairfield municipal water system and Fairfield-Suisun Sewer District) consistent with the General Plan, or (b) establishing water and wastewater systems in the plan area.

(c) County Services Area. Under both water/sewer options, the plan proposes formation of a County Services Area (CSA) to maintain and operate plan area water, sewer, storm drainage, recycled water, and parks and recreation services.

(d) Community Facilities District. The plan describes possible CSA establishment of a Community Facilities District (CFD) which, pursuant to California Assembly Bill 1600, would issue revenue bonds and establish an associated special assessment charged on a fair share basis to new plan area development benefiting from CFD-funded infrastructure.

(e) *Conservation Easement Program.* The plan also proposes establishment of a Green Valley Conservancy to oversee the protection and management of the approximately 1,590 acres of agricultural and open lands.

(f) *TDR Program.* In addition, the plan proposes a transfer of development rights (TDR) and conservation easement program to offer plan area property owners the opportunity to place agricultural lands under conservation easement and sell development rights.

(4) Required Approvals. Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would require County approval of the Specific Plan and associated County General Plan and Zoning Map amendments to incorporate the Specific Plan. Implementation of the Specific Plan would also require County establishment of the County Services Area (CSA) to maintain and operate plan area water, sewer, storm drainage, recycled water, and parks and recreation infrastructure; and County approval of a Master Development Agreement with plan area property owners. Implementation of the Specific Plan may also require local and state agency approvals from the City of Fairfield, Fairfield-Suisun Sewer District, Solano County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), California Department of Public Health, California Department of Fish and Game, and Regional Water Quality Control Board.

This EIR has been prepared by the County to provide the CEQA-required environmental documentation for all such local and state approvals.

The brief summary above should not be relied upon for a thorough understanding of the proposed project. Please refer to chapter 2 (Project Description) of the December 2009 Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Proposed Middle Green Valley Specific Plan, and associated revisions included in section 3 of this Final EIR document, for a more complete description of the proposed project.

1.3 PROGRAM EIR APPROACH

This EIR has also been formulated as a “first tier” **program EIR**. A program EIR is a particular EIR approach authorized by section 15168 (Program EIR) of the CEQA Guidelines for use in documenting the environmental implications of community general plans, specific plans, precise plans, and other planning “programs” which involve a series of interrelated actions taken by a governmental authority that can be characterized as one project to achieve an overall program goal. The CEQA-established program EIR concept and authority as they apply to the Middle Green Valley Specific Plan are described in more detail in appendix 23.2 of the Draft EIR (Program EIR Authority), and in **Master Response B** on pages 2-3 and 2-4 of this Final EIR document.

The approach taken in preparing this EIR under the program EIR authority has been to describe the anticipated broad-based, project areawide and subregional impacts of the proposed Specific Plan. The EIR describes the cumulative, aggregate effects of the combination of potential Specific Plan actions and associated development scenario on project areawide and subregional environmental conditions. Such impacts are described at a level of detail consistent with the level of detail provided in the Draft Specific Plan.

1.4 EIR SCOPE--IDENTIFIED ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

As required by the state CEQA Guidelines, the scope of this program EIR includes all environmental issues to be resolved and all areas of controversy known to the Lead Agency (the County), including those issues and concerns identified as possibly significant by the County in its preliminary environmental review of the project, and by other agencies, organizations, and individuals in response to the County's Notice of Preparation (dated June 6, 2009).¹ These environmental concerns include (listed in the order that these topics are identified in the CEQA Guidelines and addressed in this EIR):

1. Aesthetics,
2. Agricultural and mineral resources,
3. Air quality,
4. Biological resources,
5. Climate change,
6. Cultural, historic and paleontological resources,
7. Energy,
8. Geology and soils,
9. Hydrology and water quality,
10. Land use and open space,
11. Noise,
12. Population and housing,
13. Public health and safety,
14. Public services and utilities, and
15. Transportation and circulation.

¹The Notice of Preparation (NOP) is a CEQA-required brief notice sent by the Lead Agency to notify the Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, and potentially involved federal agencies that the Lead Agency plans to prepare an EIR for the project, and solicits guidance regarding EIR scope and content. The County's NOP for the Middle Green Valley Specific Plan project was sent out on June 6, 2009 and is included in appendix 23.1 of the Draft EIR.