
7.0 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS

This section discusses additional topics statutorily required by CEQA, specifically: growth-inducing impacts, significant irreversible environmental changes/irretrievable commitment of resources, and significant and unavoidable environmental impacts.

7.1 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluate the growth-inducing impacts of a proposed action. A growth-inducing impact is defined in the CEQA Guidelines as

“the way[] in which [a] proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Included in this are projects which would remove obstacles to population growth... Section 15126.2(d).

Section 15126.2 cautions that “it must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.”

A project can have direct and/or indirect growth inducement potential. Direct growth inducement would result if a project, for example, involved construction of new housing. A project would have indirect growth inducement potential if it established substantial new permanent employment opportunities (e.g., through commercial, industrial or governmental enterprises) or if it would involve a construction effort with substantial short-term employment opportunities that would indirectly stimulate the need for additional housing and services to support the new employment demand. Similarly, a project would indirectly induce growth if it would remove an obstacle to additional growth and development, such as removing a constraint on a required public service. A project providing an increased water supply in an area where water service historically limited growth could be considered growth inducing.

The State CEQA Guidelines further explain that the environmental effects of induced growth are considered indirect impacts of the proposed action. These indirect impacts or secondary effects of growth may result in significant, adverse environmental impacts. Potential secondary effects of growth include increased demand on other community and public services and infrastructure, increased traffic and noise, and adverse environmental impacts such as degradation of air and water quality, degradation or loss of plant and animal habitat, and conversion of agricultural and open space land to developed uses.

Growth inducement may constitute an adverse impact if the growth is not consistent with or accommodated by the land use plans and growth management plans and policies for the area affected. Local land use plans provide for land use development patterns and growth policies that allow for the orderly expansion of urban development supported by adequate urban public services, such as water supply, roadway infrastructure, sewer service, and solid waste service.

COMPONENTS OF GROWTH

The timing, magnitude, and location of land development and population growth in a community or region are based on various interrelated land use and economic variables. Key variables include regional economic trends, market demand for residential and non-residential uses, land availability and cost, the availability and quality of transportation facilities and public

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services, proximity to employment centers, the supply and cost of housing, and regulatory policies or conditions. Since the general plan of a community defines the location, type and intensity of growth, it is the primary means of regulating development and growth in California.

GROWTH EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

Based on Government Code Section 65300, the proposed General Plan is intended to serve as the overall plan for the physical development of the City of Madera. While the General Plan does not specifically propose any development projects, it does regulate future population and economic growth of the City, which would result in indirect growth-inducing effects.

Implementation of the proposed General Plan would redefine the existing land use designations in the incorporated City and would conceptually redefine land use designations for the areas outside of the City but within the Planning Area. At such time that these areas are annexed into the City, the land use designations would apply to future development. The General Plan would establish new policies, actions and design guidelines to guide and manage future development and land uses in the City. This would also include policy direction on roadway facility improvements, public service improvements, and the extension and expansion of utilities. The specific environmental effects resulting from the proposed land use patterns and associated extension of public services are discussed in the environmental issue areas in Sections 4.1 through 4.13. The proposed General Plan would result in a residential buildout (assumed to occur post year 2030) of approximately 73,747 residential units and a population of 263,278 persons.

Population Growth

As discussed in Section 4.3, Population and Housing, the estimated 2008 population of Madera was 56,750 (California Department of Finance estimate, 2008). The 2000 U.S. Census counted 43,207 Madera residents. The Planning Area outside the Madera city limits had a 2008 estimated population of 21,658. Both the City of Madera and the Planning Area have experienced substantial population growth in the last 18 years (1990 U.S. Census). While the growth rate has slowed in recent years, the city's population growth rate since 2000 has been 3.5 percent annually, while the population of the Planning Area outside the city grew by 2.2 percent annually. The Planning Area outside the city is estimated to have a population of 113,721 by 2030, which is an increase of 425 percent over the Planning Area's 2008 population.

The proposed City General Plan Update would accommodate more growth outside the City limits than would the existing County of Madera General Plan, since much of the land within the proposed City Planning Area is designated for agricultural land uses under the County of Madera's General Plan. However, the proposed development under the City's General Plan Update is a compact/urban form, with a mixture of land uses, reducing vehicle miles traveled (see Section 4.5, Transportation and Circulation). In addition, the City General Plan update includes a growth boundary and greenbelt.

This intensification of urban land uses is in conflict with current Madera County General Plan land use intensities (see Section 4.1, Land Use) and could induce property owners adjacent to the Planning Area to request general plan amendments for urban uses rather than current agricultural designations. The environmental effect of potential development of the Planning Area is addressed in this Draft EIR.

Growth Effects Associated with Infrastructure Improvements

The proposed General Plan Update could potentially indirectly induce growth if it would remove an obstacle to additional growth and development, such as removing a constraint on a required public service.

The proposed General Plan includes proposed roadway improvements that have been designed to support the General Plan Land Use Policy Map and maintain the City's proposed level of service (LOS) standard of LOS "C" where feasible and appropriate for City roadways, LOS "D" in the Downtown District, and LOS below LOS D for State Highways.

The proposed General Plan Update does not include any provisions requiring the oversizing of infrastructure facilities to serve growth not anticipated in the General Plan Land Use Policy Map. The physical environmental effects of the proposed roadway improvements within the Planning Area and any off-site impacts that could result from the proposed roadway improvements, where the roads continue into other jurisdictions, have been disclosed in this Draft EIR.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF GROWTH

As described above, the proposed General Plan Update would induce further population and job growth in the City, and within the Planning Area to the extent that these areas are annexed into the City, as well as potentially induce growth outside of the City and Planning Area (at the interface with other jurisdictions). Growth inducement in areas outside of the City would be limited by the adopted land uses of those jurisdictions, but, as described above, development pressure could result in requests for amendment of the General Plans of other jurisdictions. The following proposed General Plan policies, i.e., to create a greenbelt beyond portions of the City limits and to create a growth boundary would serve to reduce development pressure to intensify development at the boundaries of the City:

Policy LU-10:

The Growth Boundary is considered by the City to define the physical limits of development in Madera. The City shall direct all future growth in Madera and in the unincorporated area outside the city limits to occur inside the Growth Boundary shown on the Land Use Map in this General Plan. Within the City's Planning Area, the City encourages the County to assist the City in maintaining an agricultural green belt around the Growth Boundary by only allowing agricultural uses where land is designated for such use on the City's General Plan Land Use Map.

The following apply to the Growth Boundary:

- *The Growth Boundary may only be revised as part of a comprehensive update of the General Plan involving, at a minimum, the Land Use and Circulation elements.*
- *Any revision to the Growth Boundary shall be accompanied by a statement of findings which demonstrate the following:*
 - 1) *That the revision is consistent with the intent of the Growth Boundary and all other applicable policies in this General Plan*
 - 2) *That the revision is necessary to accommodate planned growth in Madera*

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Policy LU-11: The City specifically envisions the establishment and maintenance of a greenbelt of agricultural and other open space lands around the urbanized portion of the Planning Area, outside the Growth Boundary, as shown on the Land Use Map. In addition to the maintenance of appropriate agricultural land use designations, the City encourages the use of Williamson Act contracts and similar mechanisms to ensure the maintenance of the greenbelt. Along the west edge of the Planning Area, the Greenbelt is intended to be permanent, and the implementing mechanisms on the west edge should reflect that intent, including transfer of development rights, permanent conservation easements, etc. (See specific policies for Villages D & E for requirements to establish a permanent edge/buffer on the western boundary of these Villages)

Policy LU-12: The City shall plan and install infrastructure to serve only the area inside the Growth Boundary. The expansion of urban services (specifically including residential sewer service) outside this boundary shall not be permitted unless the City Council finds that:

- 1) The extension is needed to address a clear public health or safety need, and*
- 2) The infrastructure provided is sized to the minimum level necessary in order to reduce any excess capacity that could be used to support additional growth outside the boundary.*

Action Item LU-12.1 Develop and implement programs and strategies that support the Growth Boundary and keep urban growth inside the Growth Boundary.

Proposed roadway improvements support growth within the City, but would also facilitate further growth. As a result, the proposed General Plan Update is considered to be growth inducing. The environmental effects of growth within the City and Planning Area (Sections 4.1 through 4.13) and the project's cumulative impacts (Section 5.0) would be in addition to the following additional environmental effects of growth in the region:

- Aesthetics – Further conversion of rural, agricultural and natural open space landscape characteristics to urban conditions.
- Agricultural Resources – Continued loss of farmland to urban uses as well as increased conflicts with agricultural operations and urban uses.
- Air Quality – Increases in air pollutant emissions potentially conflicting with air quality attainment efforts under state and federal Clean Air Acts, and increased potential for the exposure to toxic air contaminants.
- Biological Resources – Loss of special-status plant and animal species habitats, degradation of habitats, and loss of special-status species.
- Cultural Resources – Impacts to known and unknown archaeological and historic resources in the region.
- Geology and Soils – Loss of top soil.

- Hydrology and Water Quality – Additional sources of point and non-point sources of surface water quality pollutants to region waterways. Further demand on groundwater resources and potential overdraft issues.
- Noise – Increased transportation noise levels from increased traffic volumes.
- Public Services and Utilities – Increased demand for the development and expansion of public services and facilities and associated environmental issues.
- Traffic – Increased traffic volumes on the region's highways and regional roadways resulting in deficient levels of service of operation.

7.2 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Public Resources Code Sections 21100(b)(2) and 21100.1(a) require that EIRs prepared for the adoption of a plan, policy, or ordinance of a public agency must include a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes of project implementation. The CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c) describes irreversible environmental changes as:

Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irrecoverable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

Implementation of the proposed City of Madera General Plan Update would result in the conversion of undeveloped open space and agricultural land areas to residential, commercial, industrial, office, public and recreational uses. Development of the City, and the Planning Area to the extent that the area is annexed into the City, would constitute a long-term commitment to residential land uses and loss of productive agricultural soils and natural resources (e.g., wetland resources). It is unlikely that circumstances would arise that would justify the return of the land to its original (pre-proposed General Plan) condition.

Development under the proposed General Plan Update would irretrievably commit building materials and energy to the construction and maintenance of buildings and infrastructure proposed. Renewable, nonrenewable, and limited resources that would likely be consumed as part of the development of the subsequent projects would include, but are not limited to: oil, gasoline, lumber, sand and gravel, asphalt, water, steel, and similar materials. In addition, development of the project would result in increased demand on public services and utilities (see Sections 4.9 Hydrology and Water Quality and 4.12 Public Services and Utilities).

7.3 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(b) requires an EIR to discuss unavoidable significant environmental effects, including those that can be mitigated, but not to a level of insignificance. Section 15093(a) of the CEQA Guidelines allows the decision-making agency, in approving a project, to determine that the benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental impacts of implementing the project. However, the City can approve a project with unavoidable significant adverse impacts if it prepares a "Statement of Overriding

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Considerations" setting forth the specific reasons for making such a judgment, and makes other findings required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15091.

The following impacts of the General Plan Update are those that include significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the project is implemented, significant irreversible environmental change and growth-inducing impacts. These are specifically identified in Sections 4.1 through 4.13, and Section 5.0 of this EIR. The reader is referred to the various environmental issue areas of these sections for further details and analysis of the significant and unavoidable impacts identified below.

SECTION 4.1 LAND USE

Consistency with Relevant Land Use Planning Documents

Impact 4.1.2 The proposed General Plan is inconsistent with some existing relevant land use planning documents. This is considered a **significant and unavoidable** impact associated with the environmental effects of inconsistency with the Madera County General Plan.

Cumulative Land Use Impacts

Impact 4.1.3 When considered with existing, proposed, approved and planned development in the region, implementation of the proposed Madera General Plan has the potential to further contribute to cumulative land use changes among local land use plans in the region resulting in significant impacts to the physical environment. This is considered a **cumulatively considerable** and a **significant and unavoidable** impact as a result of the increased environmental effects of growth beyond current adopted land use plans.

SECTION 4.2 AGRICULTURE

Loss and Conversion of Agricultural Land

Impact 4.2.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update would result in the direct loss of important farmlands (Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance) as designated by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. This is considered a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

Agricultural/Urban Interface Conflicts

Impact 4.2.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update could result in the placement of urban uses adjacent to agricultural uses. This is considered a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

Agriculturally Zoned Lands and Williamson Act Contracts

Impact 4.2.3 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update could result in a conflict with land currently zoned for agriculture as well as with existing Williamson Act contract lands. This is considered a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

Cumulative Impacts to Agricultural Resources

Impact 4.2.4 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update along with regional and statewide growth would result in a substantial contribution to the conversion of important farmland and may increase agriculture/urban interface conflicts. This is a **cumulatively considerable** and a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

SECTION 4.3 POPULATION/HOUSING/EMPLOYMENT

Population, Housing and Employment Increases

Impact 4.3.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update would include land uses that promote the increase in population, housing, and employment to the area, and thus induce substantial growth that would result in physical effects to the environment. This is a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

Cumulative Population and Housing Increases

Impact 4.3.3 Subsequent land use activities associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update, in addition to existing, approved, proposed, and reasonable foreseeable, could result in a cumulative increase in population and housing growth in the City of Madera as well as in the surrounding cities and counties, along with associated environmental impacts. This is considered a **cumulatively considerable** and a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

SECTION 4.7 NOISE

Traffic Noise Impacts

Impact 4.7.2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in increases in traffic noise levels that would be in excess of City of Madera noise standards. This is considered a **significant impact**.

Rail Noise Impacts

Impact 4.7.3 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would expose future land uses and residents to train and rail related noise. This is considered a **significant impact**.

Stationary Noise Impacts

Impact 4.7.5 As additional development occurs throughout the City, the potential exists for new noise-sensitive land uses to encroach upon existing or proposed stationary noise sources. As a result, this impact is considered **potentially significant**.

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Cumulative Noise

Impact 4.7.6 Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update along with potential development of the Planning Area could result in increased noise conflicts. This is considered a **cumulatively considerable** and a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

SECTION 4.8 GEOLOGY AND SOIL

No impacts that are significant.

SECTION 4.11 CULTURAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

No impacts that are significant.

SECTION 4.13 VISUAL RESOURCES/LIGHT AND GLARE

Alteration of Scenic Resources

Impact 4.13.1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in the alteration of scenic resources. This is considered a **significant** impact.

Cumulative Impacts to Visual Resources

Impact 4.13.3 Implementation of the proposed General Plan along with potential development of the Planning Area would result in the further conversion of the region's rural landscape to residential, commercial, and other land uses. This would contribute to the alteration of the visual resources in the region. This is considered a **cumulatively considerable** impact.