

VI. OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

As required by CEQA, this chapter discusses the following types of impacts that could result from implementation of the Draft General Plan: growth-inducing impacts; significant irreversible changes; effects found not to be significant; and significant unavoidable effects.

A. GROWTH INDUCEMENT

This section summarizes the project's growth-inducing impacts on the surrounding community. In accordance with CEQA, a project is considered growth-inducing if it would foster substantial economic or population growth. Examples of projects likely to have significant growth-inducing impacts include extensions of expansions of infrastructure systems beyond what is needed to serve project-specific demand, and development of new residential subdivisions or industrial parks in areas that are currently only sparsely developed or undeveloped. As this document is a first-tier (i.e., program-level) EIR for the proposed Draft General Plan, which will guide future development within the City of Albany, it is necessary to assess potential growth-inducing impacts.

Implementation of Albany's Draft General Plan would only induce additional population and employment growth if it designated land within the City for development that would be more intense than current designations allow. As noted in the Chapter III, Project Description, the designations in the Draft General Plan are essentially the same as the existing General Plan and no increased capacity has been identified or assumed.

Implementation of the Draft General Plan is forecast to result in 850 additional jobs and 815 additional housing units by 2035. Albany could have a total population of 20,385 residents and 8,660 housing units, which is roughly consistent with the most recent ABAG population and household projections of 21,800 residents and 8,510 housing units, respectively.¹ The total number of 5,920 jobs expected in 2035 under the Draft General Plan is approximately 9.4 percent higher than the ABAG jobs projection of 5,410 jobs. Although the anticipated number of jobs under the Draft General Plan exceeds ABAG's job projection for 2035, this discrepancy would not be considered as significant adverse growth because the anticipated job growth under the Draft General Plan would occur in already developed and urbanized areas that have transit access and existing commercial centers. Moreover, the discrepancy is due to the estimated number of existing jobs in 2015 rather than the increment of job growth forecast for 2015 to 2035.

The population and employment growth that would occur as a result of development associated with the Draft General Plan would occur entirely within Albany's City limits. Because much of the housing and commercial growth that would occur under the Draft General Plan is along commercial

¹ Association of Bay Area Governments, 2013. *Building Momentum: San Francisco Bay Area Population, Household, and Job Forecasts*.

and transit corridors, anticipated growth would have several beneficial effects. First, such growth would support regional transit systems by increasing ridership and access to transit systems and would benefit bicycle and pedestrian access. Strengthening the transit system and improving bicycle and pedestrian circulation could reduce traffic and associated environmental effects, such as air pollution and noise, within the Bay Area. Second, development associated with the Draft General Plan would increase construction of housing in Albany, allowing the City to address its fair-share housing allocation requirements. An increased overall housing supply would allow the City to better address affordable housing needs. Lastly, the population density within Albany would slightly increase. The development of dense residential and mixed-use districts within commercial and transit corridors represents an environmentally-sound method for accommodating a growing population and reducing sprawl, resulting in beneficial effects on both local and regional levels.

B. SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE CHANGES

An EIR must identify any significant irreversible environmental changes that could result from implementation of a proposed project. These may include current or future uses of non-renewable resources and secondary or growth-inducing impacts that commit future generations to similar uses. CEQA dictates that irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified. The CEQA Guidelines describe three distinct categories of significant irreversible changes: (1) changes in land use that would commit future generations; (2) irreversible changes from environmental actions; and (3) consumption of non-renewable resources.

1. Change in Land Use Which Commit Future Generations

Although virtually all of Albany is developed, implementation of the Draft General Plan would result in the introduction of residential and commercial uses in already urbanized areas. Major development projects could occur within the Solano Avenue Commercial District and San Pablo Avenue Commercial District. The intensification of development in these commercial areas would serve several purposes including: (1) provision of housing; (2) creation of transit-oriented neighborhoods; (3) utilization of underutilized land; (4) efficient use of existing roadways and infrastructure within Albany. Development would be limited to lands within the City limits. Although development associated with the Draft General Plan would commit future generations to more intensity in the commercial districts, these land uses would benefit the City and the region by providing needed housing and transit-oriented development within an existing urban area. Development associated with the Draft General Plan would not commit future generations to development pattern that is described as “urban sprawl.” The development of dense residential and mixed-use districts in proximity to transit represents an environmentally-sound method for accommodating a growing population and reducing sprawl.

2. Irreversible Damage from Environmental Accidents

No significant environmental damage, such as an accidental spill, explosion of a hazardous material, or major hazardous waste release is anticipated to occur in Albany due to the commercial and residential growth expected to occur with implementation of the Draft General Plan. On a program level, the policies and actions that increase public safety through new measures and programs as outlined in Chapter IV, Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures of this Draft EIR would reduce all such irreversible or nearly irreversible effects to less-than-significant levels.

3. Consumption of Nonrenewable Resources

Consumption of nonrenewable resources includes conversion of agricultural lands, loss of access to mining reserves, and non-renewable energy use. As identified in Section IV.A, Land Use, Planning Policy, and Agricultural Resources, there are no large-scale commercial agricultural uses in the City and no farmland is mapped in the City by the State Department of Conservation. As identified in Section IV.G, Geology, Seismicity, and Mineral Resources, no minerals or aggregate resources of statewide importance are located within Albany, and there are no natural gas, oil, or geothermal resources identified as being located in or adjacent to Albany. In addition, Draft General Plan policies CON-6.1 through CON-6.7 would support sustainable energy consumption through efficiency, conservation and sustainable production through increased use of renewable energy sources. The development of dense residential and mixed-use districts in proximity to transit would de-emphasize private automobile use and encourage transit ridership, and would result in the conservation of fossil fuels. Therefore, the Draft General Plan would result in the efficient use of non-renewable energy sources.

C. EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

The environmental topics analyzed in Chapter IV, Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures, represent those topics which generated the greatest potential controversy and expectation of adverse impacts. Each of the CEQA-defined environmental factors is considered within Chapter IV of this Draft EIR. No topics suggested for consideration in the CEQA Statute or Guidelines have been “focused out” of detailed analysis.

D. SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

Implementation of the Draft General Plan would not result in any significant unavoidable impacts.

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