

6.0 LONG TERM IMPACTS

This section describes the long-term effects of project implementation. As required by CEQA, this evaluation discusses the project's growth-inducing impacts, as well as any significant irreversible effects that could result from the project.

6.1 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

Section 15126(g) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* requires a discussion of a proposed project's potential to foster economic or population growth, including ways in which a project could remove an obstacle to growth. The project's potential to induce growth is discussed in this section.

Growth does not necessarily create significant physical changes to the environment. However, depending upon the type, magnitude, and location of growth, it can result in significant adverse environmental effects. There are three principal ways in which a project can induce growth:

1. *By extending infrastructure into an area where it did not previously exist, thus removing an obstacle to growth;*
2. *By setting an institutional precedent for similar types of development; and*
3. *By bringing new residents or employees into an area, above the number anticipated by the General Plan guiding growth in the area.*

The discussion below evaluates the project's potential to induce growth, based on the above parameters.

Development Anticipated by General Plan. The proposed project would introduce substantial commercial and office/business park development into an area that currently supports viable agricultural uses. It also includes the extension of Prado Road across U.S. Highway 101, which would directly serve proposed development, and provide easy access between the Laguna Lake area and the southeastern portion of San Luis Obispo.

At the same time, the City of San Luis Obispo's General Plan anticipates development of a magnitude similar to the proposed project. The project includes a request for a General Plan Amendment that would change the designation of a portion of the site from Medium-High Density Residential to Office. As a result, the project would result in a lower population than allowed under the existing General Plan designations for the site. The proposed project would accommodate employment of a magnitude similar to what is expected under the adopted plan. Moreover, similar commercial development is already located within the adjacent San Luis Obispo Promenade shopping center. Consequently, the proposed development would not be precedent setting with regard to the type of land uses anticipated. In addition, the Prado Road interchange is also anticipated by the City's General Plan. Because development is generally consistent with what is already expected under adopted plans, and similar to what already occurs elsewhere in the City, the proposed project is not growth-inducing from this perspective.

The proposed commercial and business park uses would generate approximately 1,666 new jobs. Using an average household size of 2.27 persons per household (U.S. Census 2000), this job creation would result in the need for 734 housing units. Although some jobs would likely be



filled by current residents of the City of San Luis Obispo, many of the new job opportunities would likely be filled by people relocating to the area. In this way, the proposed project may indirectly generate population growth in the area. The number of relocatees and the location in which they would reside cannot be predicted with any certainty, but it is likely that the proposed project would contribute to housing demand in the City. This could increase pressure for additional housing development and/or tend to drive up housing prices.

Infrastructure Extension. Because the project site is not currently urbanized, it does not include extensive infrastructure, including water or sewer infrastructure systems or roadways. However, it is bordered on three sides by urban development, including the San Luis Obispo Promenade shopping center to the north and residential and commercial development in the Laguna Lake area of San Luis Obispo to the west and south. U.S. Highway 101 forms a physical barrier to the east, but additional urban development is located to the east of the freeway, across from the site. Although it involves annexation to the City, the project could be considered to be like “infill” development given adjacent urban development. Therefore, the extension of infrastructure to the site, including roadways, would not induce growth beyond the boundaries of the site.

The Prado Road Interchange is included in the proposed project and would be constructed in part to serve the proposed development. However, the Prado Road extension and freeway interchange are already included in the City’s General Plan Circulation Element, primarily to serve General Plan buildout in the southern part of the City. The City’s Final EIR for the Land Use and Circulation Elements Update (1994) addresses the impacts of buildout under the General Plan, including the extension of Prado Road. The proposed project would hasten the timing of this roadway extension, which in turn would hasten development pressure. In addition, the project would facilitate a roadway connection from the site to Los Osos Valley Road, which could also promote additional development pressure. This would be considered an unavoidable growth inducing impact of the project.

Competition with Similar Industries. An independent economic analysis was conducted by Allan D. Kotin and Associates (ADKA; “Fiscal Impact of Proposed San Luis Marketplace and Implications for Downtown Retail Activity”, October 25, 2002) to evaluate whether the project will transfer sales from existing retail areas in the City and whether the proposed uses could be developed in existing retail areas. According to this report, the proposed project would have “minimal or only modest detrimental impact on retailing in downtown” San Luis Obispo. The report also notes that the proposed project would result in increased sales at the adjacent shopping centers due to “symbiotic effects, added market recognition, and enhanced drawing power that the combined centers will have in the region.” The report notes that as a share of total new sales from the project, about 25% would be transferred from other City retail uses. However, the report concludes that the generation of substantial additional shopping traffic to the project site, whether it comes from new visitors, new out of town shoppers, or from in-town shoppers no longer leaving town to seek retail offerings elsewhere, will have a clear economic benefit for the City and the Downtown. Short-term impacts related to lost revenues to local businesses would occur until the market adjusted to the new stores on the project site. This would be considered an unavoidable growth inducing impact, but one that is relatively short-term. These types of impacts typically occur when any large business moves into a small business market area.

Agricultural Conversion. The proposed project would result in the urbanization of a portion of the prime agricultural soil currently cultivated on the site. While such conversions have occurred



elsewhere within the County and in the Central Coast region, this action could be interpreted as precedent setting, insofar as the conversion of agriculture to urban uses elsewhere might more easily take place as a result of this project. However, it should also be noted that this particular agricultural conversion was anticipated in the EIR for the City's Land Use and Circulation Elements update. The precedent for agricultural conversion, if any, would have occurred at the time that the City's Land Use Element was adopted. The proposed project itself would therefore not be considered precedent setting for agricultural conversion.

6.2 SIGNIFICANT and IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The State CEQA Guidelines specify that an EIR include a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes of a proposed action. This includes the use of non-renewable resources, impacts that commit project areas to similar uses in the future, and irreversible environmental damage.

Project implementation would irreversibly commit about 60 acres of open agricultural lands to urban-scaled commercial and office/business park development, with the resultant loss of agricultural row crop production. Construction of new buildings, parking lots and roadways would require substantial quantities of building materials and energy, some of which are non-renewable resources. However, consumption of such resources occurs with all development in the region, and this phenomenon is not unusual or unique in San Luis Obispo. The increased employment base generated by the project would irreversibly increase the demand for finite energy resources such as petroleum and natural gas. However, the increasingly efficient building fixtures and automobile engines would temper the increased demand to some degree. Proposed development would irreversibly alter the aesthetic character of the project area, and would affect the viewshed from neighboring U.S. Highway 101.

The proposed development would require the irreversible commitment of law enforcement, fire protection, sanitation, water supply, and solid waste disposal services to the project area. As described in Section 4.8, Utilities, the proposed project would reduce demand on the groundwater basin by removing active agricultural lands from irrigation, but the project would increase demand on City of San Luis Obispo water supplies by an estimated 103.6 afy.

~~Within the Dalidio Property, the proposed project would result in loss of floodplain storage and an increase in impervious surface area. These on-site impacts would increase floodwater surface elevations across the Dalidio Property, in Prefumo Creek and in San Luis Obispo Creek downstream of Prefumo Creek. The predicted increases in water surface elevations are above the significance thresholds outlined in the San Luis Obispo Creek Waterway Management Plan design manual. These on-site flooding impacts constitute a Class I, significant and unavoidable, impact.~~

The additional employment and associated activity accommodated by the project would generate an increase in traffic, resulting in the generation of air pollutants and the further degradation of air quality (refer to Section 4.3, *Air Quality*). Ambient noise levels would also increase as a result of increased traffic and commercial activity in the area (refer to Section 4.4, *Noise*).

The proposed project would result in the direct conversion of approximately 60 acres of actively farmed prime soils to non-agricultural uses. This is considered a Class I, *significant and unavoidable* impact (refer to Section 4.6).



As discussed in Section 4.9, *Cultural Resources*, project development could result in demolition of existing on-site historic structures, resulting in a significant impact to historic resources. Impacts are significant but mitigable, provided the significant structures are retained in accordance with the mitigation measures included in this analysis. If the mitigation were not implemented, impacts to historic resources would be significant and unavoidable.

The proposed project would result in several traffic and circulation impacts that would be considered significant but mitigable with the implementation of identified circulation improvements that would be either directly provided by the applicant, or partially funded by the applicant through the payment of fair share traffic impact fees. Some of the mitigation measures identified for significant impacts would require the cooperation of Caltrans and/or off-site property owners, which cannot be assured. In such cases, traffic impacts are assumed as a reasonable worst-case assessment to be Class I, significant and unavoidable (refer to Section 4.10, *Traffic and Circulation*).

