

5 Growth-Inducing Impacts and Other CEQA-Required Discussions

This section discusses growth-inducing impacts, irreversible environmental impacts that would be caused by the project, and other CEQA-required discussions.

5.1 Growth Inducement

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(d) requires a discussion of a proposed program's potential to foster economic or population growth, including ways in which a project could remove an obstacle to growth. 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. The Housing Plan's growth inducing potential would be considered significant if reasonably foreseeable induced growth could result in significant physical effects in one or more of the issue areas:

- Population growth;
- Economic growth; or
- Removable obstacles to growth.

These issue areas are discussed in Section 5.1.1 through Section 5.1.3.

5.1.1 Population Growth

The State requires that all local governments adequately plan to meet the housing needs of their communities (HCD 2021). The Housing Plan would implement the guidance established in the 6th Cycle Housing Element to meet the City's housing need. The projected population increase in Santa Barbara is not anticipated to exceed the long-term regional population growth anticipated by the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments' 2050 Regional Growth Forecast (2050 RGF). The 2050 RGF estimates a population of 99,900 by 2035; an increase of 13,309 people. The Housing Plan would not induce substantial unplanned population growth in the City, as necessary to meet State housing law requirements.

Given that the State is in an ongoing housing crisis due to an insufficient housing supply, new residential growth under the Housing Plan would contribute to addressing the crisis and meeting the existing and future housing needs of the City. Furthermore, the 6th Cycle Housing Element was certified by HCD in February 2024, demonstrating that proposed programs within the Housing Element would adequately address the housing needs and demands of the City. Approval by the City and certification by HCD ensures that population and housing growth under the Housing Plan would not be substantial or unplanned.

The Housing Plan is intended specifically to guide growth and development in Santa Barbara such that infill development would be prioritized. As described in Section 4.9, *Transportation and Circulation*, Section 4.10, *Utilities and Service Systems*, and Section 4.11.8, *Public Services*, the Housing Plan would not cause substantial growth such that vehicle miles traveled in Santa Barbara would substantially rise, would not require unplanned utility infrastructure, and would not result in substantial environmental effects related to the provision of public service infrastructure. By its

nature, the project is intended to reduce the potential for uncontrolled growth and associated environmental impacts. For the reasons discussed above, residential growth facilitated by the Housing Plan would not lead to such impacts.

5.1.2 Economic Growth

The Housing Plan would result in new temporary employment opportunities during construction of new residential developments. Because construction workers would be expected to be primarily drawn from the existing regional work force, construction would not be growth-inducing from a temporary employment standpoint. The Housing Plan would allow for mixed-use development in the city but would not be expected to result in a direct increase in commercial development. The provision of additional housing in Santa Barbara could lead to an influx of residents and an improved jobs/housing balance, which could indirectly promote economic expansion.

The Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) designated 44 percent of total housing needs for very-low and low-income residents, as shown in Table 3-1 in Section 3, *Project Description*., and the Housing Plan includes programs, such as amending the City's density bonus program, to encourage development of affordable housing. Therefore, the Housing Plan would promote the development of housing for a range of incomes and minimize the potential for substantial displacement of existing people or housing. As a result, the Housing Plan would not induce substantial economic expansion to the extent that direct physical environmental effects would result.

5.1.3 Removal of Obstacles to Growth

The Housing Plan would prioritize urban infill areas where existing roads, water, and sewer and other utilities are in place and is not anticipated to facilitate unplanned utility extensions. As discussed in Section 4.10, *Utilities and Service Systems*, the Housing Plan would not require major infrastructure extensions into areas not already served by existing facilities. It is possible that site-specific development may require the replacement or upgrade of aging facilities and enhancement of existing infrastructure in key locations. However, the residential growth under the Housing Plan is planned and any required improvements to infrastructure or utilities would not remove obstacles to unplanned growth within Santa Barbara.

5.2 Irreversible Environmental Effects

The CEQA Guidelines require that EIRs contain a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes. This section addresses non-renewable resources, the commitment of future generations to the proposed uses, and irreversible impacts associated with the project.

As discussed in detail in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, the Housing Plan would primarily facilitate infill residential development on developed and underdeveloped sites in the City of Santa Barbara. Construction and operation of new residential development facilitated by the Housing Plan would require an irreversible commitment of construction materials and non-renewable energy resources. Future development would involve the use of building materials and energy, some of which are non-renewable resources, to construct new residential buildings and associated infrastructure and landscaping. However, consumption of these resources would occur with any new development in the region and are not unique to the Housing Plan.

Development facilitated by the Housing Plan would also irreversibly increase local demand for non-renewable energy resources such as petroleum products and natural gas. However, increasingly efficient building design would offset this demand to some degree by reducing energy demands associated with new development. New residential development facilitated by the project would be subject to the energy conservation requirements of the California Energy Code (Title 24, Part 6, of the California Code of Regulations, *California's Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings*) and the California Green Building Standards Code (Title 24, Part 11 of the California Code of Regulations). The California Energy Code provides energy conservation standards for all new and renovated residential buildings, and the Green Building Standards Code requires solar access, natural ventilation, and stormwater capture. Consequently, development facilitated by the Housing Plan would not use unusual amounts of energy or construction materials and impacts related to consumption of non-renewable and renewable resources would be less than significant.

Additional vehicle trips associated with residential growth would incrementally increase local traffic and regional air pollutant emissions, and GHG emissions. As discussed in Section 4.2, *Air Quality*, development facilitated by the project would generate air quality emissions; however, the Housing Plan would be consistent with the 2022 Ozone Plan. As discussed in Section 4.5, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, development facilitated by the Housing Plan would result in a less than significant impact because the Housing Plan is consistent with the growth assumptions utilized within the City's Climate Action Plan. Section 4.9, *Transportation*, of this EIR concludes that long-term impacts related to additional vehicle miles traveled in Santa Barbara would not exceed regional thresholds and therefore would result in a less than significant impact.

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