

Chapter 0 Preface

This chapter describes why portions of the Final Revised Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Fanita Ranch Project (proposed project) are being revised and recirculated under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), provides an overview of the content and scope of the Recirculated Sections of the Final Revised EIR (Recirculated Sections), and summarizes the public comment period after the Recirculated Sections have been made available for public and agency review.

0.1 Summary

In September 2020, the City Council of the City of Santee (City) certified the Final Revised EIR for the proposed project as compliant with CEQA. The Final Revised EIR had been prepared to analyze the potential significant environmental impacts resulting from the construction and operation of the proposed project. A lawsuit was filed challenging the adequacy of the Final Revised EIR.

In March 2022, the San Diego County Superior Court (Hon. Katherine A. Bacal, presiding) issued a ruling identifying deficiencies in the Final Revised EIR related to evacuation in the event of a wildfire. In March 2022, the trial court entered judgment and a writ of mandate (order) directing the City to set aside certification of the Final Revised EIR and the project approvals for the proposed project. The matter was thereby remanded to the City to correct the deficient portions of the Final Revised EIR.

The Recirculated Sections have been prepared to correct the deficiencies identified in the trial court's ruling, judgment, and writ. Pursuant to CEQA, if revisions to the EIR are limited to chapters or portions of the EIR, the lead agency need only recirculate the chapters or portions that have been modified (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15088.5[c]). Therefore, the Recirculated Sections include strikeout/underline changes to Chapter 3, Project Description, and Section 4.10, Land Use and Planning, because only portions thereof have been modified. The Recirculated Sections including Section 0, Preface, Section 4.18, Wildfire, and associated technical appendices are not provided in strikeout/underline because they are new or have been replaced in their entirety.

Those portions of the Final Revised EIR that were not found deficient will not be recirculated and pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Section 15088.5(f)(2), the City will not seek or entertain any further comments on those portions of the Final Revised EIR. The City will prepare written responses to comments received on the Recirculated Sections. Thereafter, the City will complete the Final Revised EIR, consisting of the Recirculated Sections, public comments, and written responses to comments on the Recirculated Sections. The City Council will then review the Final Revised EIR, along with the portions of the Final Revised EIR that were not subject to substantive revision, consider the information presented therein prior to acting on the proposed project, and determine if the Final Revised EIR, as modified, is adequate, complete, in compliance with CEQA, and reflects the City Council's independent judgment and analysis.

The Recirculated Sections have been prepared to address each of the deficiencies identified in the trial court’s ruling, which are summarized as follows:

Evacuation Impacts

1. **Mast Boulevard:** The EIR identified three primary evacuation routes; however, one such route, using Mast Boulevard to evacuate east to Highway 67, was “not possible because Mast Boulevard does not connect to Highway 67 and instead dead-ends in a park, rendering the [Wildland Fire Evacuation] Plan’s evacuation routes unclear.” (Appendix Q, [Ruling p. 2])
2. **Evacuation Modeling:** The EIR did not analyze evacuation times to determine whether project residents and the surrounding community could safely evacuate under either a staggered or mass evacuation scenario. (Appendix Q, [Ruling p. 2-3])
3. **Wildfire Threshold:** The EIR did not evaluate a fifth wildfire significance threshold, namely, would the proposed project “expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires.” The omission of this threshold meant the public was not informed about impacts related to evacuation timing or risks if residents are instructed to remain on site in a wildfire scenario. (Appendix Q, [Ruling p. 3])
4. **Responses to Comments:** Public comments questioned the “project occupants’ ability to evacuate in the event of a wildfire and traffic flow impact” and the Final Revised EIR’s response did not sufficiently “answer the question of whether those seeking to be evacuated are anticipated to be able to do so,” and whether the City “fully considered the implications of project occupants’ ability to safely evacuate.” (Appendix Q, [Ruling p. 4])
5. **Elimination of Magnolia Avenue Extension and Evacuation:** The Final Revised EIR’s “Second Errata” removed the Magnolia Avenue extension shortly before EIR certification. Given that Magnolia Avenue was previously described as a “primary” evacuation route, the “post-EIR analysis” in an errata was not adequate to provide the public with the opportunity to test and evaluate this new information, and in particular: (a) to comment on the extent to which residents living on the other connector roads may be impacted by evacuating traffic from project occupants, and (b) to comment on the proposed project’s evacuation impacts without the Magnolia Avenue extension. (Appendix Q, [Ruling p. 4-5])
6. **Elimination of Magnolia Avenue Extension and Recirculation:** Removing the Magnolia Avenue extension constituted significant new information as defined in CEQA; and therefore, the City’s decision not to recirculate the EIR after removing the Magnolia Avenue extension violated CEQA. (Appendix Q, [Ruling p. 5])

The Recirculated Sections respond to the deficiencies in the following manner:

Evacuation Impacts

1. **Mast Boulevard:** The City required a revised Wildland Fire Evacuation Plan (Appendix P2) and revisions to Section 4.18, Wildfire, of the Final Revised EIR (Wildfire Section). The Wildland Fire Evacuation Plan and revised Wildfire Section depict all evacuation routes and explain that Mast Boulevard to the east provides a connecting route to State Route (SR-) 67 indirectly through other streets. Specifically, drivers traveling east on Mast Boulevard would turn left on Los Ranchitos Road north, right to El Nopal east, and then right on Riverford Road south to connect to SR-67. This route is clearly identified on revised Figure 4.18-1, Evacuation Routes, in the Wildfire Section.
2. **Evacuation Modeling:** An evacuation travel time analyses and associated modeling has been prepared, which is incorporated into the revised Wildland Fire Evacuation Plan (Appendix P2) and referenced in the revised Fire Protection Plan (Appendix P1), and the Wildfire Section. This new evacuation travel time analysis and modeling was prepared by the Dudek Fire Protection Planning team—led by Principal Fire Protection Planner Michael Huff—in conjunction with Chen Ryan Associates’ traffic engineers with input from the Santee Fire Department (SFD). The evacuation assessment and modeling calculates estimated evacuation travel times for the surrounding community and project under targeted evacuation and mass evacuation conditions. Chen Ryan Associates was selected to perform the evacuation traffic flow portion of the evacuation analysis due to the firm’s familiarity with City’s roadways and traffic network based on its recent Santee General Plan Mobility Element update work with the City. The evacuation modeling and timing analysis includes the following, among other components:
 - Analysis of potential feasible evacuation scenarios using reasonable assumptions that take into account the wildfire history specific to the area, relevant wildfire research, and discussions with the SFD and fire professionals.
 - Identification of evacuating populations under mass evacuation and targeted evacuation scenarios. Targeted evacuation conditions were identified in consultation with the SFD based upon current evacuation practice consistent with City and County Emergency Operations Plans.
 - Identification of the proposed project’s road improvements that would enhance roadway carrying capacity under the selected evacuation scenarios.
 - Calculation of evacuation travel times for mass evacuation and targeted evacuation scenarios.
 - Evaluation of project evacuation safety and whether the proposed project will affect the existing community’s ability to safely evacuate during a wildfire event.
 - Discussion of the limitations of evacuation travel time modeling given the numerous variables and factors that drive evacuation decisions during real-time fire

situations. The proposed project’s evacuation time analysis and modeling are provided for informational purposes only and may not be used during an actual emergency evacuation because those decisions are generally made as part of unified command operations established to respond to real-time wildfires based on fire conditions, winds, weather, and other factors and variables that affect evacuation decision-making. Nonetheless, the analysis conducted in support of the proposed project’s evacuation plan was developed in coordination with SFD and represents numerous wildfire scenarios. The results from the evacuation travel time modeling are anticipated by SFD to inform engine companies for emergency action decision support and provide valuable evacuation time estimates, which will be useful for guiding the phased evacuation approach. Additionally, the modeling analysis results, as part of the proposed project’s Wildland Fire Evacuation Plan (Appendix P2), will be used to increase resident and fire personnel evacuation preparedness and awareness of available evacuation routes.

3. **Wildfire Significance Criteria:** The Wildfire Section and Fire Protection Plan (Appendix P1) have been revised to include an analysis of all applicable wildfire significance thresholds, including the question of whether the proposed project would “[e]xpose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires.” Evacuation and shelter-in-place scenarios are evaluated.
4. **Responses to Comments:** The City required a revised Wildland Fire Evacuation Plan (Appendix P2) including evacuation travel time modeling prepared by Chen Ryan Associates (Exhibit to Appendix P2) and a revised Wildfire Section to be prepared in response to the trial court’s ruling.
5. **Elimination of Magnolia Avenue Extension and Evacuation:** The extension of Magnolia Avenue from the existing terminus of Princess Joann Road to Cuyamaca Street was included in the Revised Draft EIR circulated for public review in May 2020, but was removed in the Second Errata to the Final Revised EIR in August 2020. The Magnolia Avenue extension has been added back into the proposed project as originally proposed, rendering the Second Errata unnecessary.
6. **Elimination of Magnolia Avenue Extension and Recirculation:** The Magnolia Avenue extension has been added back into the proposed project as originally proposed from the existing terminus of Princess Joann Road to Cuyamaca Street, making recirculation of the Final Revised EIR due to removal of the Magnolia Avenue extension unnecessary.

The Final Revised EIR, if certified, would be used in conjunction with the discretionary approvals required for construction and operation of the proposed project, including, but not limited to, a Development Plan, Vesting Tentative Map, Development Review Permit, and Conditional Use Permits. As originally proposed to the City, and as described in the August 2020 Final Revised EIR, the proposed project’s requested approvals included a General Plan Amendment, Specific

Plan, Development Agreement, and Rezoning of the Fanita Ranch site. Since that time, the proposed project has been deemed General Plan consistent and compliant as part of the City’s Essential Housing Program; and, accordingly, no longer requires a General Plan Amendment, Specific Plan, Rezone, or other legislative act. The applicant is also no longer seeking a Development Agreement with the City. The description of the proposed project has not changed since the Revised Draft EIR was circulated for public review in 2020 except that the Magnolia Avenue extension—originally proposed as part of the proposed project but omitted prior to the City Council hearing—has been added back to the proposed project as originally proposed.

While not required by the trial court’s ruling, the following Recirculated Sections have been revised to describe the modified discretionary actions proposed for project implementation:

1. Portions of Chapter 3, Project Description (specifically Subsection 3.12)
2. Portions of Section 4.10, Land Use and Planning (specifically Subsections 4.10.2 and 4.10.5.2)

Minor technical edits have been made to other subsections of these Recirculated Sections; however, they do not constitute “significant new information” as defined in CEQA Guidelines, Section 15088.5(a). Per CEQA Guidelines, Section 15088.5(b), recirculation is not required where the new information added to the EIR merely clarifies or amplifies or makes insignificant modifications in an adequate EIR.

Table 0-1 provides a brief overview of the Recirculated Sections and their rationale for inclusion in the recirculation.

Table 0-1. Revised and New Sections of Final Revised EIR Included in Recirculation

| Revised Sections of Final Revised EIR Included in Recirculation | Rationale for Inclusion in Recirculation |
|---|---|
| New Sections and Sections Replaced in Their Entirety | |
| Chapter 0, Preface | This Preface is included in the recirculation to provide the public with information concerning the trial court’s ruling and Final Revised EIR modifications to correct deficiencies identified in the trial court’s ruling. This Preface also summarizes the changes in discretionary entitlements sought to complete the proposed project. This Preface is a new section of the Recirculated Sections that has not been previously released for public review. |
| Section 4.18, Wildfire | The Wildfire Section has been replaced in its entirety and revised to address the deficiencies in the evacuation analysis identified in the trial court’s ruling. The revised Wildfire Section presents the results of the evacuation analyses and modeling completed for the proposed project. The revised Wildfire Section also clarifies and corrects evacuation routes available to project occupants and the surrounding community, including the Magnolia Avenue extension. It further explains that Mast Boulevard does not directly connect to SR-67 to the east but is |

Table 0-1. Revised and New Sections of Final Revised EIR Included in Recirculation

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| | <p>available as an evacuation route through the use of several connecting streets.</p> <p>Wildfire and evacuation-related threshold criteria set forth in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines have been included in Section 4.18, Wildfire. Specifically, CEQA Guidelines, Section IX(g), has been added to evaluate whether the proposed project would “[e]xpose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires.”</p> |
| <p>Appendix P1, Fire Protection Plan and Construction Fire Prevention Plan</p> | <p>The Fire Protection Plan in Appendix P1 has been replaced in its entirety and revised to address the deficiencies in the evacuation analysis identified in the trial court’s ruling. Appendix P1 includes analysis of whether the proposed project would “[e]xpose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires.”</p> |
| <p>Appendix P2, Wildland Fire Evacuation Plan</p> | <p>Appendix P2 has been replaced in its entirety and revised to address the deficiencies in the evacuation analysis identified in the trial court’s ruling. Appendix P2 includes modeling of reasonable evacuation scenarios to address whether those seeking to be evacuated are anticipated to be able to do so and to demonstrate that the City fully considered the implications of project occupants’ and the surrounding community’s ability to safely evacuate in a wildfire event. Appendix P2 also clarifies and corrects evacuation routes available to project occupants and the surrounding community, including the Magnolia Avenue extension. The Appendix explains that Mast Boulevard does not directly connect to SR-67 to the east but is available as an evacuation route through the use of several connecting streets.</p> <p>The City’s Emergency Operations Plan, the County’s Emergency Operations Plan Annex Q, and Chen Ryan Associates’ Fire Evacuation Analysis – Technical Memorandum are included as exhibits to Appendix P2.</p> |
| <p>Appendix Q, Final Ruling and Writ of Mandate</p> | <p>Appendix Q is a new appendix containing the trial court ruling, judgment, and writ of mandate.</p> |
| <p>Appendix R, Essential Housing Ordinance, <u>Certification</u>, and Notice of Exemption</p> | <p>Appendix R includes the City’s certification of Fanita Ranch as an Essential Housing Project under its Essential Housing Program. Urgency Ordinance No. 592, adopting the citywide Essential Housing Program, is also included in Appendix R for reference.</p> |
| <p>Portions of Recirculated Sections of the Revised Final EIR</p> | |
| <p>Chapter 3, Project Description (Subsection 3.12)</p> | <p>This subsection concerns the discretionary actions that the City Council would take to approve the proposed project. As noted in this Preface, the proposed project remains unchanged with the exception that the Magnolia Avenue extension has been added back into the proposed project as originally proposed. The revisions in this subsection clarify the proposed project’s designation as an Essential Housing Project pursuant to the</p> |

Table 0-1. Revised and New Sections of Final Revised EIR Included in Recirculation

| Revised Sections of Final Revised EIR Included in Recirculation | Rationale for Inclusion in Recirculation |
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| | City of Santee’s Essential Housing Program, Urgency Ordinance No. 592. The revisions explain the proposed project no longer requires a General Plan Amendment, Specific Plan, or Rezone in light of project certification under that program. The applicant is no longer seeking a Development Agreement with the City, and this discretionary action has been removed from this subsection. The applicant is newly seeking approval of a Development Plan that identifies the development requirements for the site, and this discretionary action has been added to this subsection. The applicant is also seeking a Conditional Use Permit to operate public parks, buildings, and facilities (fire station). |
| Section 4.10, Land Use and Planning (Subsections 4.10.2, 4.10.5.2) | These subsections describe the existing regulatory environment and evaluate whether the proposed project would conflict with land use plans, policies, and regulations adopted for the purpose of mitigating or avoiding an environmental effect. The revisions in these sections clarify the proposed project’s designation as an Essential Housing Project pursuant to the City of Santee’s Essential Housing Program, Urgency Ordinance No. 592. The revisions explain the proposed project no longer requires a General Plan Amendment, Specific Plan, or Rezone in light of project certification under that program. They also address the proposed project’s consistency with the City’s 2021 General Plan Housing Element and the 16 Guiding Principles for Fanita Ranch. Table 4.10-1 has been updated to reflect the revised wildfire and evacuation analyses provided in the Wildfire Section and Appendices P1 and P2. |

Only the above-outlined revised information is contained in the Recirculated Sections. All other sections of the Final Revised EIR and technical studies remain valid and are *not* being recirculated for public comment.

0.2 Public Review of Recirculated Sections of Final Revised EIR

The Recirculated Sections are available for public review and comment. The City requests that reviewers limit all public comments to the recirculated documents described in Table 0-1. The 45-day public review period is from June 10, 2022, to July 25, 2022. All comments received on the Recirculated Sections will be responded to and incorporated into a response to comments document, which will be considered by the City prior to a public hearing to consider certification of the Recirculated Sections, along with other Final Revised EIR sections. The Recirculated Sections will be available to review electronically on the City’s website at <https://www.cityofsanteeca.gov/services/project-environmental-review> during the 45-day public comment period.

Upon request, the Recirculated Sections will be available for review during regular business hours for the duration of the 45-day public review period at the following locations:

- City of Santee Department of Development Services (Building 4)
10601 Magnolia Avenue, Santee, California 92071
- City of Santee Clerk's Office (Building 3)
10601 Magnolia Avenue, Santee, California 92071
- Santee County Library
9225 Carlton Hills Boulevard, Santee, California 92071

Written and electronic comments addressing the Recirculated Sections can be mailed to the following address or emailed to:

Chris Jacobs, Principal Planner
Subject: Recirculated Sections of the Final Revised EIR for Fanita Ranch
Department of Development Services
City Hall, Building 4
10601 Magnolia Avenue
Santee, California 92071
Telephone: (619) 258-4100, extension 182
Email: cjacobs@cityofsanteeca.gov

Written and electronic comments addressing the Recirculated Sections must be received by 5:00 p.m. on July 25, 2022.

For additional information, please contact Chris Jacobs at (619) 258-4100, extension 182, or cjacobs@cityofsanteeca.gov.

0.3 Concurrent Preparation of the Administrative Record

In compliance with California Public Resources Code, Section 21167.6.2:

THE RECIRCUALTED SECTIONS OF THE FINAL REVISED EIR ARE SUBJECT TO SECTION 21167.6.2 OF THE PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE, WHICH REQUIRES THE RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS FOR THIS PROJECT TO BE PREPARED CONCURRENTLY WITH THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS; DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY, OR SUBMITTED TO, THE LEAD AGENCY TO BE POSTED ON THE LEAD AGENCY'S INTERNET WEB SITE; AND THE LEAD AGENCY TO ENCOURAGE WRITTEN COMMENTS ON THE PROJECT TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE LEAD AGENCY IN A READILY ACCESSIBLE ELECTRONIC FORMAT.

The record of proceedings may be accessed at <https://www.cityofsanteeca.gov>.