

2. Introduction

2.1 PURPOSE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that all state and local governmental agencies consider the environmental consequences of projects over which they have discretionary authority before taking action on those projects. This draft environmental impact report (DEIR) has been prepared to satisfy CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines. The environmental impact report (EIR) is the public document designed to provide decision makers and the public with an analysis of the environmental effects of the proposed project, to indicate possible ways to reduce or avoid environmental damage and to identify alternatives to the project. The EIR must also disclose significant environmental impacts that cannot be avoided; growth inducing impacts; effects not found to be significant; and significant cumulative impacts of all past, present and reasonably foreseeable future projects.

Pursuant to CEQA Section 21067, the lead agency means “the public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project which may have a significant effect upon the environment.” The City of Banning has the principal responsibility for approval of the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan project. For this reason, the City of Banning is the CEQA lead agency for this project.

The intent of the DEIR is to provide sufficient information on the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan to allow the City of Banning to make an informed decision regarding approval of the project. Specific discretionary actions to be reviewed by the City are described later in Section 3.4, *Intended Uses of the EIR*.

This DEIR has been prepared in accordance with requirements of the:

- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.)
- State Guidelines for the Implementation of the CEQA of 1970 (CEQA Guidelines), as amended (California Code of Regulations Sections 15000 et seq.)

The overall purpose of this DEIR is to inform the lead agency, responsible agencies, decision makers and the general public of the environmental effects of the development and operation of the proposed Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan project. This DEIR addresses the potential environmental effects of the project, including effects that may be significant and adverse; evaluates a number of alternatives to the project; and identifies mitigation measures to reduce or avoid adverse effects.

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2.2 NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND INITIAL STUDY

The City of Banning determined that an EIR would be required for this project and issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Initial Study on April 20, 2015 (see Appendix A). Comments received during the public review period, from April 20 to May 19, 2015, are in Appendix B.

The NOP process is used to help determine the scope of the environmental issues to be addressed in the DEIR. Based on this process and the initial study for the project, certain environmental categories were identified as having the potential to result in significant impacts. Issues considered Potentially Significant are addressed in this DEIR, but issues identified as Less Than Significant or No Impact are not. Refer to the Initial Study in Appendix A for discussion of how these initial determinations were made.

Seven agencies/interested parties responded to the NOP. This DEIR has taken into consideration those responses. Table 2-1 summarizes the issues identified by the commenting agencies or persons, along with a reference to the section(s) of this DEIR where the issues are addressed.

Table 2-1 NOP Comment Summary

Commenting Agency/Person	Date	Comment Type	Comment Summary	Issue Addressed In:
Agencies				
South Coast Air Quality Management District Jillian Wong, Ph.D., Program Supervisor Planning, Rule Development & Area Sources	4/24/15	Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Requests a copy of the Draft EIR and all appendices or technical documents related to air quality and greenhouse gas analyses upon completion▪ Provides links and recommendations on CalEEMod software analysis for up-to-date methodology▪ States that the EIR should identify any potentially adverse air quality impacts from all phases of the project (i.e., construction and operations per phase) and all air pollutant sources related to the project▪ Air quality impacts from indirect sources (e.g., generated or attracted vehicular traffic) should also be analyzed▪ Recommends quantifying criteria pollutant emissions and comparing the results to the regional significance thresholds▪ Recommends calculating localized air quality impacts and comparing the results to localized significance thresholds▪ Recommends performing a mobile source health risk assessment if the project generates or attracts vehicular trips, especially heavy-duty diesel-fueled vehicles▪ Provides guidance on siting incompatible land uses and resources to identify all possible mitigation measures for air quality impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Section 5.3, <i>Air Quality</i>▪ Section 5.7, <i>Greenhouse Gas Emissions</i>

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Table 2-1 NOP Comment Summary

Commenting Agency/Person	Date	Comment Type	Comment Summary	Issue Addressed In:
Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas) Anthony A. Klecha	5/4/15	Natural gas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SoCalGas has an existing 36-inch high pressure natural gas transmission line that traverses the project site ▪ Recommends that the project applicant call Underground Service Alert at 811 at least two business days prior to performing any excavation work for the proposed project so Underground Service Alert can coordinate with SoCalGas and other utility owners in the area to mark the locations of buried utility-owned lines ▪ If SoCalGas needs to abandon or relocate portions of its existing natural gas lines due to the proposed project, the project applicant should coordinate with SoCalGas to follow-up on this matter ▪ Any potential impacts on SoCalGas' existing gas lines should be appropriately considered and addressed prior to the certification of the Final EIR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.16, <i>Utilities and Service Systems</i>
Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District Henry Olivo, Engineering Project Manager	5/14/15	Flood Hazards; Water Quality; Jurisdictional waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Notes that the project involves District Master Plan facilities, which must be constructed to District standards, and District plan check and inspection will be required prior to District approval ▪ Notes that plan check, inspection, and administrative fees will be required ▪ Notes that an encroachment permit shall be obtained for any construction related activities occurring within District ROW or facilities ▪ Stated that the proposed project may require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit from the State Water Resources Control Board; clearance for grading, recordation, or other final approval should not be given until the City has determined that the proposed project has been granted a permit or is shown to be exempt ▪ If the project site involves a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mapped flood plain, the City should require the applicant to provide all studies and information needed to meet FEMA requirements and a Conditional Letter of Map Revision prior to grading, recordation or other approvals, and a Letter of Map Revision prior to occupancy ▪ If a natural watercourse or mapped flood plain is impacted by the proposed project, the City should require the applicant to obtain a Section 162 Agreement from the California 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.4, <i>Biological Resources</i> ▪ Section 5.9, <i>Hydrology and Water Quality</i>

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Commenting Agency/Person	Date	Comment Type	Comment Summary	Issue Addressed In:
			Department of Fish and Wildlife and a Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, or written correspondence from these agencies indicating the project is exempt from these requirements	
California Department of Transportation District 8 Mark Roberts, Office Chief Intergovernmental Review, Community and Regional Planning	5/15/15	Traffic	<p>The following comments were in response to reviewing an older version of the traffic impact analysis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Noted that the proposed project includes improvements at intersections that have direct effect on SR-243. ▪ Listed several intersection improvements that must be implemented within the proposed project's time schedule ▪ Requested Synchro Files of several improvements ▪ Stated that all traffic study issues need to be addressed prior to submittal for Encroachment Permits, which are required prior to any construction within State right-of-ways; and provided contact information regarding permit application and submittal requirement details ▪ All work undertaken within SR-18 right-of-ways shall be in compliance with current design standards, applicable policies, and construction practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.15, <i>Transportation and Traffic</i>
State of California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Ken Chiang, P.E., Utilities Engineer Rail Crossings and Engineering Branch/ Safety and Enforcement Division	5/18/15		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stated that several existing at-grade rail crossings presently provide access to the project area to and from Interstate 10 ▪ Recommends the City add language to the Specific Plan so that any future development adjacent to or near the rail right-of-way (ROW) is planned with the safety of the rail corridor in mind ▪ Notes that increased traffic volumes would occur not only on streets and at intersections, but also at at-grade crossings; thus, the project should consider pedestrian circulation patterns or destinations with respect to railroad ROW and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act ▪ Suggests considering mitigation measures related to grade separations for major thoroughfares, improvements to existing at-grade crossings due to increased traffic volumes, and continuous vandal resistant fencing or other appropriate barriers to prevent trespassers onto the railroad ROW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.15, <i>Transportation and Traffic</i>
Southern California Association of	5/19/15	Consistency with RTP/SCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SCAG reviews environmental documents for regionally significant projects for their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.10, <i>Land Use and</i>

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Commenting Agency/Person	Date	Comment Type	Comment Summary	Issue Addressed In:
Governments (SCAG) Ping Chang, Program Manager II Land Use and Environmental Planning			<p>consistency with SCAG's adopted Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides list of SCAG 2012 RTP/SCS goals; link to listing of RTP/SCS strategies; adopted SCAG forecasts of 2020 and 2035 population, household, and employment forecasts for the region and City of Banning; and recommended mitigation measures 	<i>Planning</i>
Southern California Edison (SCE) Annette Franco, Local Public Affairs Region Manager	5/19/15	Electricity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ States that SCE maintains and operates the following utility lines in the project area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 115 kilovolt (kV) subtransmission line within the proposed paseo (Pas 14-A, 14-B, 14-C, and 14-D) - Two 500 kV transmission lines along the southern project boundary (PAs 1 and 2-B), which traverse PAs 15-b and 17, and are adjacent to PAs 5-D and 3-D ▪ States that development of the proposed project has the potential to encroach and impact SCE's existing utility corridors and access roads ▪ States that any parkways or pathways that invite the public onto SCE's ROW will require installation of fencing and/or climbing discouragers on each transmission line tower at the customer's expense ▪ SCE's ROW and fee-owned properties are purchased for the exclusive use of SCE to operate and maintain its present and future facilities; SCE will review any proposed use and approvals/denials will be provided in writing ▪ Requests five sets of plans depicting SCE's facilities and associated land rights to SCE Real Properties Department for review ▪ Concerned that the proposed internal roadway system and roundabout that bisects SCE's existing 115 kV utility corridor may conflict with SCE's existing transmission line design (SCE is required to comply with CPUC's General Order 95) ▪ If the proposed project requires modification or relocation of electrical facilities that operate at or above 50 kV, the project may be subject to CPUC's General Order 131-D1 and should be addressed in the DEIR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.16, <i>Utilities and Service Systems</i>
Individuals				
Linda Pippenger	5/1/15	Public Services, Traffic, Water Supply, Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concerned about lack of medical facilities and fire stations in the southern portion of the City where the Specific Plan area is located 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.13, <i>Public Services</i> ▪ Section 5.15,

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Table 2-1 NOP Comment Summary

Commenting Agency/Person	Date	Comment Type	Comment Summary	Issue Addressed In:
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Notes that main access to the project site is via 22nd Street, which has frequent trains blocking access; this may be a problem for emergency access ▪ Stated that the water well on the south side of Westward Avenue and Woodland Avenue runs "dry" or is improperly maintained. ▪ Concerned that new development would have an adverse impact on the water well ▪ Believes that the traffic impact study does not adequately analyze existing conditions (including the Sunset Avenue closure for grade separation work and high speeds along Westward Avenue) ▪ Noted that Dysart Park is not part of the project site and is privately owned ▪ Recommends analysis of various project scenarios, including no development; 1,800 dwelling units with existing zoning; and the proposed project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Transportation and Traffic</i> ▪ <i>Section 5.16, Utilities and Service Systems</i> ▪ <i>Chapter 7, Alternatives</i>
Barbara Hanna	5/10/15	Water Supply; Hydrology; Biological Resources; and Traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Noted that 50-70 percent of Banning's water supply comes from the Banning Water Canyon via the flume, which has been damaged and needs to be repaired ▪ Noted that Beaumont Cherry Valley Water District has not replaced the surplus water pumped from the Beaumont water basins ▪ Stated that cumulative water supply impacts of the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan and the Butterfield Specific Plan projects is a major concern ▪ Stated that Smith Creek is an important wildlife corridor and also has a power flow that can alter based on storm events ▪ Concerned about increased traffic near railroad crossings; believes the project applicant should pay for the construction of an additional underpass ▪ Noted that the new Sunset Avenue underpass was not designed for new homes according to Caltrans ▪ Believes new development should not occur in Banning without sufficient and reliable water sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Section 5.4, Biological Resources</i> ▪ <i>Section 5.9, Hydrology and Water Quality</i> ▪ <i>Section 5.15, Transportation and Traffic</i> ▪ <i>Section 5.16, Utilities and Service Systems</i>
Tom Anderson	5/10/15	Water Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concerned about available water supply for the proposed project given the current drought conditions ▪ Against the project unless a water source can be located and available for at least 20 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Section 5.16, Utilities and Service Systems</i>

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Prior to preparation of the DEIR, a public scoping meeting was held on April 29, 2015, to determine the concerns of responsible and trustee agencies and the community regarding the proposed project. The scoping meeting was held at the City of Banning Council Chambers, 99 E. Ramsey Street, Banning, CA 92220, and was attended by a number of community members and interested parties. Table 2-2 summarizes the issues identified at the scoping meeting and references the section(s) of this DEIR where the issues are addressed.

Table 2-2 Scoping Meeting Comment Summary

Commenter	Topic	Comment Summary	Issue Addressed In
Linda Pippenger	Traffic, Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stated that traffic traveling southward on Sunset Avenue and along Westward Avenue between Sunset Avenue and Banning High School is very congested ▪ Sunset Avenue is a narrow street that will likely need additional traffic lights and road widening if the project is implemented ▪ Stated that Sunset Avenue is currently closed for railroad grade separation and questioned whether the traffic impact analysis would study the roadway as open or closed ▪ Questioned whether the EIR would evaluate alternatives in addition to the proposed project, including no development and existing General Plan buildout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.15, <i>Transportation and Traffic</i> ▪ Chapter 7, <i>Alternatives</i>
Don Smith	Biological Resources, Traffic, Water, Student Safety (near schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stated that wildlife are known to be present in the project area, including desert tortoises, nesting eagles, coyotes, foxes, burrowing owls ▪ Concerned about loss of wildlife species with the loss of existing grazing land ▪ Owns a portion of Montgomery Creek and states that the proposed undergrounding of the creek would create a gap in the existing wildlife corridor along the creek ▪ Questioned whether the traffic impact analysis takes into account the six phases of the proposed project ▪ Stated that Lincoln Street should be included in the traffic impact analysis because it may need to be widened due to the proposed project ▪ Stated that the streambed within the project site tend to meander and change courses after heavy rainfall ▪ Questioned how water impacts can be mitigated when there is not enough water to support the project entirely ▪ Questioned whether residents of the proposed Specific Plan could replace desert landscaping with lawns and lead to increased water usage ▪ Worried about safety of Banning High 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.4, <i>Biological Resources</i> ▪ Section 5.9, <i>Hydrology and Water Quality</i> ▪ Section 5.15, <i>Transportation and Traffic</i> ▪ Section 5.16, <i>Utilities and Service Systems</i>

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Table 2-2 Scoping Meeting Comment Summary

Commenter	Topic	Comment Summary	Issue Addressed In
		School students walking on 8th Street between W. Barbour Street and W. Lincoln Street after school; the road is very narrow and is used by motorists and students	
Amy Pippenger	Traffic, Cumulative Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Questioned whether Westward Avenue would be widened because of existing congestion traveling in the east-west direction through Banning ▪ Stated that traffic along Highland Springs Avenue is very congested ▪ Stated that the Butterfield Specific Plan in northwest Banning and the proposed project would have adverse cumulative impacts on public services (i.e., police, fire, hospitals) and traffic ▪ Stated that Sunset Avenue is currently closed and under construction for a railroad grading separation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.13, <i>Public Services</i> ▪ Section 5.15, <i>Transportation and Traffic</i> ▪ Cumulative impacts are analyzed in all sections of Chapter 5, <i>Environmental Analysis</i>
Rick Pippenger	Traffic, Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stated that Westward Avenue is a narrow road that cannot be widened anymore because of a City water well located alongside the road ▪ Concerned about increase in traffic congestion due to the proposed project and cumulative developments, including the Butterfield Specific Plan ▪ Stated that there is no roadway capacity for the proposed project nor the Butterfield Specific Plan project ▪ Stated that a water well near his house runs dry two to three times a year and no water comes out of his faucet; concerned about adverse water supply impacts of the proposed project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.15, <i>Transportation and Traffic</i> ▪ Section 5.16, <i>Utilities and Service Systems</i>
Joe Magaditsch	Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concerned about water supply impacts of the proposed project ▪ Questioned whether the Specific Plan would allow for lawns ▪ Questioned why the City of Banning is selling water to Beaumont 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.16, <i>Utilities and Service Systems</i> <p>During the scoping meeting, the City clarified that Banning is not selling water to the City of Beaumont.</p>
Bill Dickson	Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Questioned how it is possible that the project would not have an adverse impact on the City's water supply ▪ Stated that the City is required to cut water usage by 32 percent as mandated by the State Water Control Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.16, <i>Utilities and Service Systems</i>

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Table 2-2 Scoping Meeting Comment Summary

Commenter	Topic	Comment Summary	Issue Addressed In
Katie Bray	Biological Resources, Hydrology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stated that desert tortoises and velvet ants are present on her property ▪ Questioned how biological resources are evaluated (i.e., survey methodology) ▪ Stated that Sunset Avenue near Bobcat Road is very muddy and difficult to drive on during heavy rainfall ▪ Concerned that the proposed project would only improve streets and roadways within the project site and not improve nearby roadways, including her property on Sunset Avenue/Bobcat Road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.4, <i>Biological Resources</i> ▪ Section 5.9, <i>Hydrology and Water Quality</i> ▪ Section 5.15, <i>Transportation and Traffic</i>
Sue West	Geology, Soils, Sewer Treatment, Native American Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Questioned whether the project would include digging and excavation to lay down sewer and water pipes ▪ Stated that the soils onsite are very sandy and not adequate to build upon ▪ Concerned about the City's sewer treatment plant capacity to treat all the generated wastewater from the project ▪ Stated that Morongo Band of Mission Indians owns land east and southeast of the project site; concerned whether they know about the proposed project ▪ Stated that the proposed neighborhood entry park near Banning High School would become a place where students loiter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.5, <i>Cultural Resources</i> ▪ Section 5.6, <i>Geology and Soils</i> ▪ Section 5.16, <i>Utilities and Service Systems</i> <p>The concern about a proposed park becoming a place where students loiter is not an environmental issue; therefore, it is not addressed in the EIR.</p>
Charles Hough	CEQA, Recycled Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Questioned credibility of CEQA process and Initial Study ▪ Stated that no new development should occur unless it benefits the City's existing residents and community ▪ Questioned whether recycle/reclaimed water pipes would be installed on the project site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 1.2, <i>Environmental Procedures</i> ▪ Section 2, <i>Environmental Checklist</i>, of Appendix A (Initial Study) ▪ Section 5.16, <i>Utilities and Service Systems</i>
Carl Douglas	Traffic, Student Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Questioned how traffic counts are conducted and whether surveyors count students crossing streets during peak hours before and after school ▪ Concerned about student safety hazards walking to and from the proposed Rancho San Gorgonio Elementary School (proposed by Banning Unified School District) ▪ Stated that students constantly walk across all streets in that area and also jump across the railroad tracks ▪ Concerned about traffic safety hazards on student pedestrians if the proposed project is implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.15, <i>Transportation and Traffic</i>

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Table 2-2 Scoping Meeting Comment Summary

Commenter	Topic	Comment Summary	Issue Addressed In
Inge Schuler	Noticing, Hydrology, Biological Resources, Contaminated Wells, Seismic Activities, Cultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concerned about limited effort in noticing the general public about the Notice of Preparation and scoping meeting ▪ Concerned about channelizing Pershing, Montgomery, and Smith Creeks onsite ▪ Stated that the creeks can substantially overflow and change courses during heavy rainfall ▪ Concerned about project impacts on biological resources, such as large cats and bears, burrowing owls, and wildlife corridors ▪ Concerned about the validity of biological surveys, particularly for burrowing owls ▪ Cited a seismic report written by Lucy Jones stating that if a Northridge-sized earthquake were to occur near the Salton Sea, the entire Pass area, including Banning, would be heavily impacted ▪ Concerned about seismic issues onsite ▪ Stated that new findings have shown that three wells located along Westward Avenue and one well located north of Interstate 10 in northwest Banning are contaminated with Chromium-6 and questioned how water quality would be addressed ▪ Stated that cultural resources onsite include historic cattle watering holes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chapter 2, <i>Introduction</i> ▪ Section 5.4, <i>Biological Resources</i> ▪ Section 5.5, <i>Cultural Resources</i> ▪ Section 5.6, <i>Geology and Soils</i> ▪ Section 5.8, <i>Hazards and Hazardous Materials</i> ▪ Section 5.9, <i>Hydrology and Water Quality</i>
Jim Smith	Noticing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stated that public notices should be put in a display ad on the newspaper in addition to the City's website and Facebook page ▪ Stated that noticing can also go on the Record Gazette's website or Facebook page 	The project complies with detailed noticing requirements per CEQA.
Diane Box	Noticing, Public Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stated that Facebook is a useful method of noticing the general public ▪ Concerned and fearful about how the proposed project would impact the City, including police services, availability of jobs, water supply, and school capacities ▪ Questioned what types of residents the proposed project would attract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 5.12, <i>Population and Housing</i> ▪ Section 5.13, <i>Public Services</i> ▪ Section 5.16, <i>Utilities and Service Systems</i> <p>The concern of future resident types attracted by the proposed project is not an environmental issue; therefore it is not addressed in the EIR.</p>

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2.3 SCOPE OF THIS DEIR

The scope of the DEIR was determined based upon the City's Initial Study, comments received in response to the NOP, and comments received at the scoping meeting conducted by the City. Pursuant to Sections 15126.2 and 15126.4 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the DEIR should identify any potentially significant adverse impacts and recommend mitigation that would reduce or eliminate these impacts to levels of insignificance.

The information in the Chapter 3, *Project Description*, establishes the basis for analyzing future, project-related environmental impacts. However, further environmental review by the City may be required as more detailed information and plans are submitted on a project-by-project basis.

2.3.1 Impacts Considered Less Than Significant

One environmental impact category is identified here as not being significantly affected by, or affecting the proposed Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan project and as such is not discussed in detail in this DEIR. This determination was made by the City of Banning in its preparation of the Initial Study (see Appendix A). Mineral Resources is not addressed in the DEIR.

2.3.2 Potentially Significant Adverse Impacts

Sixteen environmental factors have been identified as potentially significant impacts if the proposed project is implemented. These factors are:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

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2.3.3 Unavoidable Significant Adverse Impacts

This DEIR identifies five environmental topical sections with significant and unavoidable adverse impacts, as defined by CEQA that would result from implementation of the proposed project. Unavoidable adverse impacts may be considered significant on a project-specific basis, cumulatively significant, and/or potentially significant. If the City, as the lead agency, determines that unavoidable significant adverse impacts will result from the project, the City must prepare a “Statement of Overriding Considerations” before it can approve the project. A Statement of Overriding Considerations states that the decision-making body has balanced the benefits of the proposed project against its unavoidable significant environmental effects and has determined that the benefits of the project outweigh the adverse effects, and therefore, the adverse effects are considered to be acceptable. The impacts that were found in the DEIR to be significant and unavoidable are:

Air Quality

- **Impact 5.3-1.** Project-related construction emissions would exceed the South Coast Air Quality Management District’s (SCAQMD’s) thresholds for reactive organic compounds (ROG) and nitrous oxide (NO_x) during ground disturbing activities and during architectural coating phases. Implementation of Mitigation Measures 3-1 through 3-5 would minimize short-term criteria pollutant emissions to the extent feasible. However, ROG and NO_x emissions would still exceed emission thresholds. Additionally, buildup of the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan would occur over approximately 18 years or longer (2017 through 2035). Construction time frames and equipment for specific projects are not available. There is a potential for multiple developments to be constructed at any one time, resulting in significant construction-related emissions. Therefore, despite adherence to Mitigation Measures 3-1 through 3-5, regional construction emissions identified in Impact 5.3-1 would remain significant and unavoidable.
- **Impact 5.3-2.** Operational activities of the proposed project would generate peak daily emissions in exceedance of the SCAQMD daily thresholds for ROG, NO_x, carbon monoxide (CO), Respirable Coarse Particulate Matter (PM₁₀), and Respirable Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}). Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-6 would reduce operation-related criteria air pollutants and encourage and accommodate use of alternative-fueled vehicles, multimodal transportation, and energy efficient technology. However, despite adherence to mitigation, Impact 5.3-2 would remain significant and unavoidable.
- **Impact 5.3-4.** The Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan would result in a substantial increase in growth compared to what was identified in the City’s General Plan and would exceed SCAQMD’s regional operational thresholds. As a result, the proposed project could potentially exceed the assumptions in the regional air quality management plan (AQMP) and would not be considered consistent. Mitigation measures applied for Impacts 5.3-1 and 5.3-2 and the design and regulatory standards of the Specific Plan would reduce the project’s regional construction-related and operational phase criteria air pollutant emissions to the extent feasible. However, given the potential increase in growth and associated increase in criteria air pollutant emissions, the project would be potentially inconsistent with the assumptions in the AQMP. Thus, Impact 5.3-4 would remain significant and unavoidable.

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Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- **Impact 5.7-1.** Development in accordance with the proposed project would generate GHG emissions in exceedance of SCAQMD's Tier 4 performance targets. Implementation of Mitigation Measures 7-1 through 7-3 and Project Design Features 7-1 through 7-5 would reduce GHG emissions from stationary and mobile sources to the extent feasible. Additionally, Mitigation Measures 3-1 through 3-6 detailed in Section 5.3, *Air Quality*, would also encourage and accommodate use of alternative-fueled vehicles, multimodal transportation, and energy efficient technology that would help reduce vehicle miles traveled and GHG emissions. However, due to the magnitude of GHG emissions associated with the proposed project, Impact 5.7-1 would remain significant and unavoidable.

Noise

- **Impact 5.11-1.** Noise from construction activities from implementation of projects in the Specific Plan area could result in substantial impacts to sensitive receptors. Mitigation Measure 11-1 would reduce potential noise impacts during construction to the extent feasible. However, due to the potential for construction to occur in close proximity to sensitive receptors, there would be a substantial noise increase over existing ambient noise levels. Although temporary construction barriers would reduce construction noise levels to the City's interior noise standard (of 55 dBA for 15 minutes or below) for residences and schools located within 71 feet of construction activities, there would still be the potential for a readily perceptible noise increase at sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the project over the years the project is constructed. Therefore, impacts would be significant and unavoidable.
- **Impact 5.11-3.** Noise-sensitive uses would be exposed to elevated traffic noise levels that would result in substantial impacts. No individual mitigation measure and no combination of feasible or practical mitigation measures are available to reduce project-generated traffic noise to less than significant levels. Thus, traffic noise impacts are significant and unavoidable.

Population and Housing

- **Impact 5.12-1.** Buildout of the proposed Specific Plan would introduce up to 9,038 residents, which would exceed SCAG's population projections for the City in 2040 by approximately 1,041 residents. There are no feasible mitigation measures to reduce impacts of population growth. Thus, Impact 5.12-1 would be significant and unavoidable.

Transportation and Traffic

- **Impact 5.15-1.** The project in combination with cumulative development would cause a significant impact at intersections under the jurisdiction of the cities of Banning and Beaumont and Caltrans. With implementation of program improvements combined with the improvements listed in Mitigation Measures 15-1 to 15-6 at impacted study area intersections, the intersections would operate within acceptable levels of service. However, the primary responsibility for approving and/or completing certain

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improvements outside of Banning lies with agencies other than the City of Banning (i.e., City of Beaumont, Caltrans). Thus, there is potential that significant impacts may not be fully mitigated if such improvements are not completed for reasons beyond the City of Banning's control (e.g., the City cannot undertake or require improvements outside of Banning's jurisdiction). Therefore, this impact would remain significant and unavoidable.

- **Impact 5.15-2.** The project in combination cumulative development would cause a significant impact at several freeway mainline segments and on freeway off-ramps on the I-10 freeway. High occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and general use lanes would be required to improve freeway mainline operations. However, these improvements would require approval from Caltrans as the owner/operator of I-10. Caltrans currently does not have a funding mechanism for development projects to contribute to fair share fees to implement improvements on Caltrans facilities. Therefore, the City of Banning or the property owner/developer would not be able to guarantee the implementation of these measures. Thus, impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

Mitigation would also be required at several freeway ramps—No. 21, Sunset Avenue (NS) at I-10 EB Ramps (EW); No. 33, 8th Street (NS) at I-10 WB Ramps (EW); and No. 34, 8th Street (NS) at I-10 EB Ramps (EW). However, the improvement would require approval from Caltrans as the owner/operator of these freeway ramps. Caltrans currently does not have a funding mechanism for development projects to contribute to fair share fees to implement improvements on Caltrans facilities. Therefore, the City of Banning or the property owner/developer would not be able to guarantee the implementation of these measures. Therefore, impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

- **Impact 5.15-3.** The project in combination with cumulative development would result in freeway segments and intersections in the CMP network exceeding LOS standards. Similar to Impact 5.15-1, several roadway improvements would be required outside the City's jurisdiction. Thus, there is potential that significant impacts may not be fully mitigated. Impacts would therefore be significant and unavoidable.

2.4 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

The following documents are incorporated by reference in this DEIR, consistent with Section 15150 of the State CEQA Guidelines, and are available for review at the City of Banning Planning Division, 99 E. Ramsey Street, Banning, CA 92220.

- **City of Banning General Plan, January 2006:** The 2006 General Plan serves as the major blueprint for directing growth within the City of Banning and presents a comprehensive plan to accommodate the City's growing needs. Currently this document regulates the existing land uses within the proposed project site. The General Plan analyzes existing conditions in the City, including physical, social, cultural, and environmental resources and opportunities. The General Plan also looks at trends, issues, and concerns that affect the region, includes City goals and objectives, and provides policies to guide

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development and change. This Draft EIR references applicable General Plan goals and policies to analyze impacts of the proposed project.

- **City of Banning Municipal Code, updated July 2015:** The Banning Municipal Code is a set of laws governing the City of Banning and covers all aspects of City regulations, including zoning, permitted uses and standards, and various development requirements. Zoning district standards are also included in the code. Where applicable, code sections are referenced throughout the Draft EIR.

2.5 FINAL EIR CERTIFICATION

This DEIR is being circulated for public review for a period of 45 days. Interested agencies and members of the public are invited to provide written comments on the DEIR to the City address shown on the title page of this document. Upon completion of the 45-day review period, the City of Banning will review all written comments received and prepare written responses for each comment. A Final EIR (FEIR) will be prepared incorporating all of the comments received, responses to the comments and any changes to the DEIR that result from the comments received. This FEIR will be considered by City of Banning decision makers for potential certification.

The DEIR is available to the general public for review at the following locations:

- City of Banning Planning Division, 99 E. Ramsey Street, Banning, CA 92220
- Banning Library District, 21 West Nicolet Street, Banning, CA 92220

2.6 MITIGATION MONITORING

Public Resources Code Section 21081.6 requires that agencies adopt a monitoring or reporting program for any project for which it has made findings pursuant to Public Resources Code 21081 or adopted a Negative Declaration pursuant to 21080(c). Such a program is intended to ensure the implementation of all mitigation measures adopted through the preparation of an EIR or Negative Declaration.

The Mitigation Monitoring Program for the Rancho San Gorgonio Specific Plan will be completed concurrently with the Final EIR, prior to consideration of the project by the City of Banning City Council.

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