

## 1.1 Project Background and Overview

The Lime Rock Valley Specific Plan (LRVSP) (proposed project) is a planned residential community totaling approximately 740 acres with a variety of lot sizes and housing types, designed to ensure the preservation of significant historical sites and prominent natural features, including oak woodlands, steep slopes, streams, and wetlands. The proposed project would include a mix of low-density residential and open space uses. Specifically, the proposed project would consist of up to 800 single-family residential units on approximately 358 acres, an 8-acre neighborhood park with recreational amenities, and about 335 acres of public and private open space. The balance of the project area would consist of roads and rights-of-way. Other features of the proposed project include a network of pedestrian trails and pathways that would connect and enhance existing and proposed trails in the area, including the El Dorado Trail. The proposed project would require annexation of the LRVSP area into the El Dorado Irrigation District (EID) service area for water and wastewater. The proposed project would also require an amendment to the El Dorado Hills Community Services District (CSD) sphere of influence to include the LRVSP area and annexation of the LRVSP area into the El Dorado Hills CSD service area for parks and recreation.

## 1.2 Purpose of this Environmental Impact Report

This draft environmental impact report (EIR) (State Clearinghouse No. 2013022042) has been prepared according to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq. statute) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR], Title 14, Chapter 3) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with implementing the proposed project, including implementing the LRVSP, amending the El Dorado County (County) general plan and related specific plans, and making zoning changes (see Chapter 2, *Project Description*).

CEQA requires public agencies to consider the potential adverse environmental impacts of projects under their consideration. This includes both direct impacts and reasonably foreseeable indirect impacts. A discretionary project that would have a significant adverse impact on the environment cannot be approved without the preparation of an EIR. This includes the proposed project.

According to Section 15002 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the basic purposes of CEQA include the following.

- Inform governmental decision makers and the public about the potential significant environmental effects of proposed activities.
- Identify ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced.
- Prevent significant, avoidable damage to the environment by requiring changes in projects through the use of alternatives or mitigation measures when the governing agency finds the changes to be feasible.

- Disclose to the public the reasons why a governmental agency approved the project in the manner the agency chose if significant environmental effects are involved.

CEQA establishes a process for analyzing a project's potential impacts. It is not a permit and does not regulate the project. CEQA also does not require that a proposed project be approved or denied. CEQA's purposes are to ensure that public agencies make a good faith effort at disclosing the potential environmental impacts of projects to decision makers, the public, and other agencies, and implement actions that will reduce or avoid potential significant impacts (i.e., mitigation measures).

The County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors will review the Draft EIR to understand the project's impacts before taking action. They will also consider other information and testimony that will arise during deliberations on the project before making their decision.

## 1.2.1 Level of Detail and Scope of the Environmental Impact Report

CEQA identifies various types of EIRs, the most common of which is the project EIR. A project EIR focuses primarily on the changes in the environment that would result from a development project. It examines all phases of the project, including planning, construction, and operation. For the proposed project, this Draft EIR covers environmental impacts on a project level for onsite improvements, supported by site-specific studies.

Offsite improvements associated with the proposed project, including connections to existing infrastructure such as roadways, water, and wastewater, are included in the project. Each of these offsite improvements is examined to determine potential impacts. Analysis of potential impacts associated with improvements that would be necessary if LRVSP is constructed prior to the adjacent proposed development is provided separately from those which would be necessary if that development precedes LRVSP. Where feasible, mitigation measures are recommended. The offsite improvements are analyzed to the extent that details were available at the time that this Draft EIR was prepared, and later environmental review based on review of this EIR may be required once infrastructure details are known.

## 1.3 Scoping and Public Involvement

### 1.3.1 Purpose of Scoping

CEQA outlines a scoping process as part of the environmental review of a proposed project. State CEQA Guidelines Section 15083 defines early consultation, also called *scoping*, as the opportunity for reviewing agencies and the public to identify the range of actions, alternatives, mitigation measures, and significant impacts to be analyzed in depth in an EIR. The opportunity to provide input on the issues and alternatives to be evaluated during the environmental process is provided to potentially affected federal, state, and local agencies; Native American tribes; and other interested persons or organizations that may be concerned with the environmental effects of the project.

As described below, the scoping process for this EIR involved the distribution of an NOP of a draft EIR, holding a public scoping meeting, and requesting comments and input from agencies and individuals on the NOP. The County continued to accept comments and include individuals on distribution lists long after the official end of the comment period.

## 1.3.2 Notice of Preparation Scoping Meetings

An NOP was prepared for the proposed project and published for a 30-day public review and comment period beginning February 20, 2013 (Appendix A, *Notice of Preparation and Comment Matrix*). The County held a public scoping meeting on March 12, 2013, at Light of the Hills Lutheran Church in Cameron Park, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. The scoping meeting was an open-house-style event, with boards and materials at stations operated by County staff and consultants. The project applicants were also present. Twenty-four people, representing both public agencies and the general public, attended the meeting.

Approximately 35 individuals, including both public agency representatives and members of the general public, provided written or verbal comments on the NOP. A summary table of these comments and where pertinent discussions is included in Appendix A, *Notice of Preparation and Comment Matrix*. These comments were considered in preparing this Draft EIR. After review of all relevant comments received during the NOP comment period on environmental issues, the County determined that the following resource areas would be reviewed for potential environmental impacts.

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology, Soils, Minerals, and Paleontological Resources
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology, Water Quality, and Water Resources
- Land Use Planning and Agricultural Resources
- Noise and Vibration
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Utilities
- Recreation
- Transportation and Circulation

In addition, in May 2011, (prior to submitting a formal application for the proposed project), the project applicants began hosting a number of informational meetings for specific groups as requested. These meetings have continued, with the most recent meeting in August 2015. Since that time the project has been dormant and there have been no substantial changes to the proposed project. The project applicants and the County have been in consultation with representatives from the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians and the United Auburn Indian Community, in accordance with Senate Bill 18.

### 1.3.3 Future Opportunities for Public Input

The review period for this Draft EIR will be a minimum of 60 days, beginning on May 22, 2024 and ending July 22, 2024. The Draft EIR and the Public Review Draft LRVSP are available on the County's website (<https://www.edcgov.us/Planning/>); at the El Dorado Hills Library, 7455 Silva Valley Parkway, El Dorado Hills; the Cameron Park Library, 2500 Country Club Drive, Cameron Park; the Placerville Library, 345 Fair Lane, Placerville; and at the public counter at the Community Development Agency, 2850 Fairlane Court, Building C, Placerville. Technical studies prepared for the proposed project, except where confidential (e.g., cultural resources), are also available on the County's website at the link above.

Written comments can be submitted by mail to:

Mr. Cameron Welch  
El Dorado County, Planning and Building Department  
Planning Division  
2850 Fairlane Court, Building C  
Placerville, CA 95667

Written comments can be submitted by email to: [LRVSP@edcgov.us](mailto:LRVSP@edcgov.us)

Comments may also be submitted after the end of the formal review period; however, it is possible that they may not be responded to in writing and included in the Final EIR. No comments on the Draft EIR will be responded to outside of the CEQA process, and commenters will not be sent individual responses to their comments. The responses will be contained in the Final EIR. Comments that are received too late for inclusion in the Final EIR will nonetheless be made available to the County Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors during their deliberations on the proposed project.

### 1.3.4 Final Environmental Impact Report

After the close of the public review period for the Draft EIR, the County will prepare the Final EIR. The Final EIR will consist of the Draft EIR and the comments received during the formal review period of the Draft EIR; responses to the comments received that relate to environmental issues; and any revisions made to the Draft EIR in response to the comments in errata format. The Final EIR will also contain copies of the comments received during the public review period.

The Final EIR and accompanying Draft EIR will be available to the County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for consideration during their decision-making process to approve or deny the proposed project.

## 1.4 Intended Use of this Environmental Impact Report

This Draft EIR examines the potential impacts of the proposed project (the proposed LRVSP), as well as the proposed new design guidelines. The Final EIR will be considered by the County Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors prior to taking their final action on the proposed project. The agencies expected to use the Final EIR in the future include those listed below.

- El Dorado County Planning Commission
- El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
- El Dorado County Planning and Building Department
- El Dorado Irrigation District (EID)
- El Dorado Hills Community Services District
- Cameron Park Community Services District
- Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Water Board)
- State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board)
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
- El Dorado Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)

Chapter 2, *Project Description*, Section 2.4, *Required Approvals*, identifies the specific County and state approvals and permits that would be required.

Federal agencies may use this EIR as reference for permitting purposes. These agencies may include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), among others.

## 1.5 Document Format

The format of this Draft EIR is outlined below to assist the reader's review of the document.

- **Executive Summary** summarizes the contents and findings contained in this Draft EIR. It also contains a brief description of the proposed project, alternatives, areas of known controversy, public review procedures, and a summary table listing project impacts, mitigation measures that have been recommended to reduce any significant impacts, and the level of significance of each impact following mitigation.
- **Chapter 1, Introduction**, is the introduction to the Draft EIR and describes the project background, purpose of the project, and the public review process.
- **Chapter 2, Project Description**, contains the project description. It summarizes the proposed LRVSP. Full copies of the LRVSP are available for public review at the County Community Development Agency offices, online that the County's website, and at County public libraries as indicated in Section 13.3. above.
- **Chapter 3, Impact Analysis**, consists of sections containing the environmental analysis for each environmental topic (e.g., aesthetics, air quality, noise). Each section is organized according to the following framework.
  - Existing Conditions
    - Regulatory Setting
    - Environmental Setting
  - Environmental Impacts
    - Methods of Analysis

- Thresholds of Significance
- Impacts and Mitigation Measures
- **Chapter 4, *Alternatives Analysis***, contains discussion of the project alternatives. As allowed by CEQA, most of the impacts of these alternatives are evaluated at a more general level than the analyses contained in Chapter 3.
- **Chapter 5, *Other CEQA Considerations***, contains discussions of additional topics required by CEQA, including growth-inducing impacts, cumulative impacts, unavoidable impacts, and significant irreversible environmental changes.
- **Chapter 6, *List of Preparers***, lists the organizations and persons consulted in preparation of the Draft EIR and the Draft EIR preparers.
- **Chapter 7, *References Cited***, provides details about the references cited and personal communications related to preparation of the Draft EIR. All of the items listed in Chapter 7 are available for review during normal business hours at the County Community Development Agency offices: 2850 Fair Lane, Building C.
- **Appendices A through N** contain copies of the NOP and comment letters and supporting technical reports.
  - Appendix A, *Notice of Preparation and Comment Matrix*
  - Appendix B, *El Dorado County General Plan Policies and Lime Rock Valley Specific Plan Policies*
  - Appendix C, *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Studies and Calculations*
  - Appendix D, *EDCAQMD Rule 223-1 Best Management Practices and Rule 223-2*
  - Appendix E, *Plant Species*
  - Appendix F, *Oak Resources Technical Report*
  - Appendix G, *Native American Consultation Documentation*
  - Appendix H, *Water Supply Assessment*
  - Appendix I, *CEQA Guidelines Appendix F: Energy Conservation*
  - Appendix J, *Watermark Engineering Lime Rock Valley Specific Plan Drainage Analysis*
  - Appendix K, *Fehr & Peers Lime Rock Valley Specific Plan Transportation Impact Analysis*
  - Appendix L, *Deer Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion Project, Mitigation Monitoring Program*
  - Appendix M, *Wildfire Risk Assessment*
  - Appendix N, *Evacuation Analysis*