
1. INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 TYPE AND PURPOSE OF THE EIR

The Town and Country Village El Dorado Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, Public Resources Code (PRC) Sections 21000-21189.91, as amended, and the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 14, Sections 15000-15387 (CEQA Guidelines). El Dorado County is the lead agency for the environmental review of the Town and Country Village El Dorado Project (proposed project) evaluated herein and has the principal responsibility for reviewing the impacts and considering approval of the proposed project. As required by Section 15121 of the CEQA Guidelines, this EIR will (a) inform public agency decision-makers, and the public generally, of the significant environmental effects of the project, (b) identify possible ways to minimize the significant adverse environmental effects, and (c) describe reasonable and feasible project alternatives which reduce environmental effects. The public agency shall consider the information in the EIR along with other information that may be presented to the agency.

As provided in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15021, public agencies are charged with the duty to avoid or minimize environmental damage where feasible. The public agency has an obligation to balance a variety of public objectives, including economic, environmental, and social issues. CEQA requires the preparation of an EIR prior to approving any project that may have a significant effect on the environment. For the purposes of CEQA, the term “project” refers to the whole of an action, which has the potential for resulting in a direct physical change or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378[a]). With respect to the proposed project, the County has determined that the proposed development is a “project” within the definition of CEQA, which has the potential for resulting in significant environmental effects.

The lead agency is required to consider the information in the EIR along with any other available information in deciding whether to approve the application. The basic requirements for an EIR include discussions of the environmental setting, environmental impacts, mitigation measures, alternatives, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts.

The CEQA Guidelines identify several types of EIRs, each applicable to different project circumstances. El Dorado County’s overall strategy for structuring the EIR will be to comprehensively evaluate the potential physical environmental impacts of full Project Buildout so as to minimize, and to the extent feasible, avoid, the need for future environmental review as the proposed project builds out over time. This type of EIR is typically referred to as a project level EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15161). As stated in Section 15161, a project level EIR should focus primarily on the changes in the environment that would result from a specific development project, and shall examine all phases of the project including planning, construction, and operation. The current application includes project-level detail for the Project Development Area, and while comparable detail is not yet available for subsequent components of the Program Study Area, El Dorado County has provided meaningful environmental review related to construction and operations of the balance of full Project Buildout, thus, minimizing the need for future phase-



specific environmental review. As explained in *Citizens for a Sustainable Treasure Island v. City and County of San Francisco* (2014) 227 Cal.App.4th 1036, 1047-1048 (*Treasure Island*), courts strive to avoid attaching too much significance to titles in ascertaining whether a legally adequate EIR has been prepared for a particular project. The level of specificity of an EIR is determined by the nature of the project and the “rule of reason”, rather than any semantic label accorded to the EIR.

1.2 KNOWN RESPONSIBLE AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

“Responsible agency” means a public agency that proposes to carry out or approve a project for which a lead agency is preparing or has prepared an EIR or Negative Declaration. For the purpose of CEQA, the term responsible agency includes all California public agencies other than the lead agency that have discretionary approval power over the project or an aspect of the project. The El Dorado County Air Quality Management District (EDCAQMD), El Dorado Irrigation District (EID), El Dorado Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo), and Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) are identified as potential responsible agencies for the proposed project.

“Trustee agency” means a State agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by a project, which are held in trust for the people of the State of California. The only known possible trustee agency for the proposed project is the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

Although not subject to California law, and, thus, outside the definitions of responsible agency or trustee agency, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will also be called upon to grant approvals under federal law necessary for the development of the project site. These agencies do not have duties under CEQA, but, rather, are governed by a variety of federal statutes, such as the Clean Water Act, which governs the dredging and filling of waters of the U.S. (e.g., intrastate wetlands), and the Endangered Species Act, which requires the USACE to consult with the USFWS as part of the review process for any wetland or fill permits that may be required. Additionally, because EID draws water from Folsom Lake, the annexation of the project site into the EID service area would also require approval from the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation.

1.3 PROJECT SUMMARY

The following sections include summaries of the project location and setting, and project description.

Project Location and Setting

The project site is located in El Dorado County, California, approximately 500 feet north of U.S. Highway 50 (US 50), east of Bass Lake Road. The approximately 60.5-acre site is identified by Assessor’s Parcel Numbers (APNs) 119-080-12, -021 and -023. The project site is located in the southern central portion of the Bass Lake Hills Specific Plan (BLHSP); the northern portion of the project site is located within the Community Region of the El Dorado County General Plan, and the southern portion of the site is located within the Rural Region. Surrounding land uses include undeveloped land and rural residences within the BLHSP to the north; rural residences to the west; the El Dorado Hills Fire Department Station 86 to the northwest; undeveloped land and rural residences to the south, across US 50; and undeveloped land to the east, with the Holy Trinity Parish and School located farther east. It should be noted that in recent years, multiple Tentative



Subdivision Maps have been approved for properties within the BLHSP, north of the project site, which are undergoing development.

The BLHSP designates the project site as Low Density Residential Planned Development with a maximum allowable density of 0.2 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) (L.2-PD) south of Country Club Drive and Low Density Residential Planned Development with a maximum allowable density of 0.7 du/ac (L.7-PD) north of Country Club Drive. The project site is zoned Residential Estate-10 acres (RE-10).

Project Description

The project site would consist of two areas: the Project Development Area consists of the northernmost and southernmost 30.3 acres of the project site, and would be developed with two hotels, retail services, two restaurants, a museum, an event center, associated parking, 56 residential cottages for employee housing, and an additional 56 residential cottages that may be rented on a daily or extended stay basis, which would require a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). The Program Study Area consists of the central and easternmost 30.2 acres of the project site, and may include future development of additional hotels, medical facilities, senior housing, townhomes and cottages, and other uses allowed by the proposed zoning districts. As discussed above, buildout of the Project Development Area will be evaluated at a project level, and buildout of the Program Study Area will be evaluated at a program level based on the potential allowable uses, building areas, and required parking described in the BLHSP Amendment document (see Appendix A). The proposed project would require approval of a General Plan Amendment, BLHSP Amendment, Rezone, a Planned Development, Tentative Subdivision Map, and a CUP, as well as other responsible agency approvals.

The details of the proposed project, including required approvals, are described in further detail in Chapter 3, Project Description, of this EIR.

1.4 EIR PROCESS

The EIR process begins with the decision by the lead agency to prepare an EIR, either during a preliminary review of a project or at the conclusion of an Initial Study. Once the decision is made to prepare an EIR, the lead agency sends a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to appropriate government agencies and, when required, to the State Clearinghouse (SCH) in the Office of Planning and Research (OPR), which will ensure that responsible and trustee State agencies reply within the required time. The SCH assigns an identification number to the project, which then becomes the identification number for all subsequent environmental documents on the project. Commenting agencies have 30 days to respond to the NOP and provide information regarding alternatives and mitigation measures they wish to have explored in the Draft EIR and to provide notification regarding whether the agency will be a responsible agency or a trustee agency for the project. The NOP completed for the proposed project was circulated to the public; local, State, and federal agencies; and other known interested parties for a 30-day review period from July 18, 2023 to August 17, 2023 (see Appendix B).

Upon completion of the Draft EIR and prior to circulation to State and local agencies and interested members of the public, a notice of completion is filed with the SCH and a public notice of availability is published to inform interested parties that a Draft EIR is available for agency and public review. In addition, the notice provides information regarding the location where copies of the Draft EIR are available for public review and any public meetings or hearings that are scheduled. The Draft EIR is circulated for a minimum period of 45 days, during which time



reviewers may submit comments on the document to the lead agency. The lead agency must respond to comments in writing. If significant new information, as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5, is added to an EIR after public notice of availability is given, but before certification of the EIR, the revised EIR or affected chapters must be recirculated for an additional public review period with related comments and responses.

A Final EIR will be prepared, containing public comments on the Draft EIR and written responses to those comments, as well as a list of changes to the Draft EIR text necessitated by public comments, as warranted. The Final EIR will also include the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) prepared for the proposed project in accordance with PRC Section 21081.6. Before approving a project, the lead agency must certify that the EIR (consisting of the Draft EIR and Final EIR) has been completed in compliance with CEQA, and that the EIR has been presented to the decision-making body of the lead agency, which has reviewed and considered the EIR. The lead agency must also certify that the EIR reflects the lead agency's independent judgment and analysis.

The findings prepared by the lead agency must be based on substantial evidence in the administrative record and must include an explanation that bridges the gap between evidence in the record and the conclusions required by CEQA. If the decision-making body elects to proceed with a project that would have unavoidable significant impacts, then a Statement of Overriding Considerations explaining the decision to balance the benefits of the project against unavoidable environmental impacts must be prepared.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE EIR

An Initial Study has not been prepared for the proposed project, as the EIR will address all CEQA-required environmental topics identified in the CEQA Guidelines. The following environmental issue areas are addressed in the EIR:

- Aesthetics;
- Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy;
- Biological Resources;
- Cultural Resources;
- Geology and Soils;
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
- Hydrology and Water Quality;
- Land Use and Planning/Population and Housing;
- Noise;
- Public Services and Recreation;
- Transportation;
- Tribal Cultural Resources;
- Utilities and Service Systems;
- Wildfire;
- Effects Found Not to Be Significant;
- Statutorily Required Sections; and
- Alternatives Analysis.

The evaluation of effects is presented on a resource-by-resource basis in Chapters 4.1 through 4.14 of the EIR. Each chapter is divided into the following four sections: Introduction, Existing



Environmental Setting, Regulatory Context, and Impacts and Mitigation Measures. Impacts that are determined to be significant in Chapters 4.1 through 4.14, and for which feasible mitigation measures are not available to reduce those impacts to a less-than-significant level, are identified as *significant and unavoidable*. In addition, Chapter 4.15, Effects Not Found to be Significant, has been prepared to present information regarding resource areas the lead agency has determined will not be significantly affected by the proposed project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15128). Chapter 5 of the EIR presents a discussion of growth-inducing impacts, summary of cumulative impacts, and significant irreversible environmental changes associated with the project. Alternatives to the proposed project are discussed in Chapter 6 of the EIR.

1.6 DEFINITION OF BASELINE

According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15125, an EIR must include a description of the existing physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project to provide the “baseline physical conditions” against which project-related changes could be compared. In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(a) states that an EIR shall identify and focus on the significant environmental effects of the proposed project. The CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.2(a), states in pertinent part:

An EIR shall identify and focus on the significant environmental effects of the proposed project. In assessing the impact of a proposed project on the environment, the lead agency should normally limit its examination to changes in the existing physical conditions in the affected area as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published, or where no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced.

Normally, the baseline condition is the physical condition that exists when the NOP is published. The NOP for the proposed project was published on July 18, 2023. Therefore, conditions existing at that time are considered to be the baseline against which changes that would result from the proposed project are evaluated. Impacts could include both direct and indirect physical changes to the baseline condition. The baseline condition for the proposed project site is described in Chapter 3, Project Description, of this EIR. The baseline conditions pertaining to specific environmental impact areas are described in the “Existing Environmental Setting” sections of Chapters 4.1 through 4.14 of this EIR.

1.7 NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND SCOPING

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, an NOP was circulated to the public, local, State and federal agencies, and other known interested parties for a 30-day public and agency review period from July 18, 2023 to August 17, 2023 (see Appendix B). The purpose of the NOP was to provide notification that an EIR for the proposed project was being prepared and to solicit public input on the scope and content of the document.

In addition, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, El Dorado County held an in-person NOP scoping meeting on August 8, 2023 at the El Dorado Hills Fire Department Community Room, and a virtual NOP scoping meeting on August 9, 2023, during the 30-day review period for the purpose of receiving comments on the scope of the environmental analysis to be prepared for the proposed project. Agencies and members of the public were invited to attend and provide input on the scope of the EIR.

A total of 55 written comment letters were submitted during the NOP public review period. In addition, a total of 17 verbal comments were received during the virtual and in-person NOP



scoping meetings held for the project. The comment letters and verbal comment summary are provided as Appendix C to this EIR. All comments were taken into consideration during the preparation of this EIR. A summary of the NOP comments received is provided in Section 1.8 below.

1.8 COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE NOTICE OF PREPARATION

As noted above, El Dorado County received 55 letters during the NOP public review period from July 18, 2023 to August 17, 2023, as well as a total of 17 verbal comments during the virtual and in-person NOP scoping meetings. The comment letters and verbal comment summary are provided as Appendix C to this EIR. The comments received during the NOP public review period were provided by the following representatives of public agencies and groups:

Public Agencies

- El Dorado Irrigation District – Michael J. Brink
- El Dorado Local Agency Formation Commission – Erica Sanchez
- Native American Heritage Commission – Cameron Vela

Individuals

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Alan Sherman | • Kathleen Jermstad |
| • Ana Azarkeyvan (verbal comment) | • Kathy Hatten |
| • Andreanna Miranda | • Ken Greenwood (verbal comment) |
| • Andrew Wong | • Kim Tank |
| • Anonymous Neighbor | • Laureen Shuttleworth |
| • Anthony Dubovik | • Laurel Brent-Bumb |
| • Bryce Miller | • Laurie Heyman |
| • Chris Metzen (verbal comment) | • Lianna Estes |
| • Christy Leflar | • Luke Stratigakes |
| • Cinda and Jack Walton | • Lynda Seymour (2) |
| • Daniel Mueller (verbal comment) | • Lynda Seymour (verbal comment) |
| • Debbie Lewis-Barbour | • Mary Burnham (verbal comment) |
| • Debra Deti | • Mattias Bergman (verbal comment) |
| • Dena Nkadi (verbal comment) | • Meera Ramakrishnan |
| • Dennis Daniel | • Mike Leflar |
| • Dennis E. Bane | • Nicky Smith (verbal comment) |
| • Don Dupere | • Peter Evenhuis |
| • Donn Neher (verbal comment) | • Phil Alexander |
| • Enrique and Reyna Rodriguez (verbal comment) | • R. Wahl |
| • Frank Porter | • Rex Price |
| • Glenda Carminati | • Richard Holmes |
| • Guy and Lynda Seymour (2) | • Ron “JJ” Loder |
| • Helen Stokes | • Sabrene Neider |
| | • Salina (2) |
| | • Sanford Ogden III |



- Hooshang Mehrshani (verbal comment)
- Jan Taylor (verbal comment)
- Janice Taylor
- John (verbal comment)
- John Albano
- John Albano (verbal comment)
- John Forst
- Karan and Steve Marsh
- Scot D. Bernstein
- Scott Green (verbal comment)
- Stacie Sherman
- Stanley Price (3)
- Steve Ferry
- Tita Bladen (verbal comment)
- Vijay Kumar
- William Kraft

The following list, categorized by issue, summarizes the concerns brought forth in the comment letters received on the scope of the EIR:

<p><u>Aesthetics</u> (Chapter 4.1)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenic views along US 50 and Bass Lake Road. • Impacts of the hotel on the aesthetics of the rural community. • New sources of light and glare. • Landscaping remaining consistent with the natural environment.
<p><u>Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Energy</u> (Chapter 4.2)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in traffic leading to increased emissions. • Health issues as a result of increased air pollution. • The use of diesel fuel and impacts to air quality. • Air quality impacts due to particulate matter during construction. • The inclusion of an evaluation of energy demand associated with the project. • Solar power use at the project site. • Testing for asbestos in the soil prior to any ground-disturbing activities.
<p><u>Biological Resources</u> (Chapter 4.3)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts to native trees. • Adverse effects to riparian communities. • Impacts to special-status species. • Interference with the movement of native wildlife species. • Verification of the project's payment of mitigation fees. • Proper monitoring of mitigation measures related to biological resources.
<p><u>Cultural Resources</u> (Chapter 4.4)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project's impact on the heritage and history of the region, including impacts to cultural resources such as Historic Old Bass Lake Road and Lincoln Highway.
<p><u>Land Use and Planning/Population and Housing</u> (Chapter 4.8)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project consistency with the County General Plan. • Project consistency with the County zoning ordinance. • Impacts on population density due to project inconsistency with the Bass Lake Hills Specific Plan and County General Plan. • Project consistency with County's Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) goals.



<p>Noise (Chapter 4.9)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases in noise during operation, including transportation noise increases. Impacts to residences within the project area due to project-generated noise increases.
<p>Public Services and Recreation (Chapter 4.10)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased demand for emergency services and law enforcement. Potential impacts to fire and emergency medical service facilities, parks and recreation, and road maintenance. Payment of fair share development fees by the applicant. Inclusion of public open space within the project site.
<p>Transportation (Chapter 4.11)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases in traffic congestion, especially on Bass Lake Road and Country Club Drive. Impacts on roadway circulation in the area due to project-generated traffic increases. Increases in regional vehicle miles traveled (VMT) due to the proposed project. Project-generated traffic increases causing a need to widen local roadways. Access to US 50 and increased queuing along Bass Lake Road. Hazards related to road design, and the need for traffic-calming measures. Increased risk of accidents due to increased traffic. Impacts on bicycle facilities. Bike and pedestrian access to the project site. Impacts to the County's Park-and-Ride program.
<p>Utilities and Service Systems (Chapter 4.13)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EID's capacity to serve the project and their ability to meet future increased water demand. Inadequate water supply to service the project due to the project-generated population increase. The location, size, and capacity of existing water supply infrastructure, and the need for improvements required to provide service to the project site. The need for on-site and off-site wastewater facility improvements due to treatment issues. Sewer routing impacts to Serrano Village C-2 Tentative Map. Growth inducing impacts of proposed sewer line.
<p>Wildfire (Chapter 4.14)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project site being located within a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Impacts to evacuation routes.
<p>Alternatives Analysis (Chapter 6)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including an analysis of alternative locations for the project.

Concerns related to the issues above are addressed in this EIR in the relevant sections identified in the first column.

1.9 DRAFT EIR AND PUBLIC REVIEW

This Draft EIR is being circulated for public review and comment for a period of 45 days. During this period, the general public, organizations, and agencies can submit comments to the Lead



Agency on the Draft EIR's accuracy and completeness. Release of the Draft EIR marks the beginning of a 45-day public review period pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15105. The public can review the Draft EIR at the County's website at:

<https://engageeldorado.us.engagementhq.com/edc-projects-in-your-area>

or at following address during normal business hours:

El Dorado County, Planning Services Department
2850 Fairlane Court
Placerville, CA 95667

Comments may be submitted both in written form and/or orally at the public hearing on the Draft EIR. Notice of the time and location of the hearing will be published in local newspapers, mailed to property owners and residents surrounding the project, emailed to residents that have requested to be placed on the project's email notification list, posted on the County's website, and posted at and adjacent to the site prior to the hearing.

All comments or questions regarding the Draft EIR should be addressed to:

Bret Sampson, Planning Manager
El Dorado County Planning and Building Department
2850 Fairlane Court
Placerville, CA 95667

Or provided via email at: TownAndCountryEIDorado@edcgov.us

1.10 ORGANIZATION OF THE DRAFT EIR

The EIR is organized into the following sections:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The Introduction chapter of the EIR provides an introduction and overview describing the intended use of the EIR and the review and certification process, as well as summaries of the chapters included in the EIR and summaries of the issues and concerns received from the public and public agencies during the NOP review period.

Chapter 2 – Executive Summary

The Executive Summary chapter of the EIR summarizes the elements of the project and the environmental impacts that would result from implementation of the proposed project, describes proposed mitigation measures, and indicates the level of significance of impacts after mitigation. In addition, the Executive Summary includes a summary of the project alternatives and areas of known controversy.

Chapter 3 – Project Description

The Project Description chapter of the EIR provides a detailed description of the proposed project, including the project's location, background information, objectives, technical characteristics, and required entitlements and approvals.



Chapter 4 – Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation

Contains project specific and cumulative analysis of environmental issue areas associated with the proposed project. The section for each environmental issue contains an introduction and description of the setting of the project site, identifies impacts, and recommends appropriate mitigation measures.

Chapter 5 – Statutorily Required Sections

The Statutorily Required Sections chapter of the EIR provides discussions required by CEQA regarding impacts that would result from the proposed project, including a summary of cumulative impacts, potential growth-inducing impacts, significant and unavoidable impacts, and significant irreversible changes to the environment.

Chapter 6 – Alternatives Analysis

The Alternatives Analysis chapter of the EIR provides a comparative analysis of the alternatives to the proposed project, their respective comparative environmental effects, and a determination of the environmentally superior alternative. It should be noted that the alternatives are analyzed at a level of detail less than that of the proposed project; however, the analyses include sufficient detail to allow for a meaningful comparison of impacts.

Chapter 7 – References

The References chapter of the EIR provides bibliographic information for all references and resources cited.

Chapter 8 – EIR Authors and Persons Consulted

The EIR Authors and Persons Consulted chapter of the EIR lists EIR and technical report authors who provided technical assistance in the preparation and review of the EIR.

Appendices

The Appendices include the NOP, comments received during the NOP comment period, and technical reports prepared for the proposed project.

