

CHAPTER 2

SUMMARY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief description of the proposed Riverfront Project (Project), known areas of controversy or concern, project alternatives, all potentially significant impacts identified during the course of this environmental analysis, and issues to be resolved. This summary is intended as an overview and should be used in conjunction with a thorough reading of the EIR. The text of this report, including figures, tables and appendices, serves as the basis for this summary.

2.2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addresses the potential environmental effects of construction of a mixed-use project in downtown Santa Cruz. The Riverfront Project consists of demolition of existing commercial buildings and the construction of a seven-story, 188,694-square-foot, mixed-use building with 175 residential condominium units and 11,498 square feet of ground floor and levee-front commercial space. A total of 20 residential units would be designated as affordable housing, with 15 units for very-low-income households and 5 units for low-income households. The Project applicant is seeking a 35-percent density bonus pursuant to state and local law (Government Code Section 65915 and City of Santa Cruz Municipal Code Chapter 24.16, Part 3). See Chapter 3, Project Description, for a full description of the Project.

2.3 AREAS OF CONTROVERSY OR CONCERN

The following issues of concern were raised during the scoping process for the Project, including oral comments received at a public scoping meeting and written comments received in response to circulation of the EIR Notice of Preparation (NOP). Comments in response to the NOP are included in Appendix A. As indicated in Chapter 1, Introduction, the comments have been taken into consideration in the preparation of this EIR for comments that raise environmental issues. See Appendix B for review of other topics not addressed in the EIR.

- Biological resource impacts, including habitat modification, habitat loss, and impacts to wildlife movement and nesting birds;
- Impacts to archaeological resources;
- Effects of ground improvement methods and foundation design on San Lorenzo River, groundwater and water quality;
- Project energy use; and
- Impacts to coastal resources and consistency with the City's Local Coastal Program.

2.4 SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES

CEQA Guidelines require that an EIR describe and evaluate alternatives to the Project that could eliminate significant adverse Project impacts or reduce them to a less-than-significant level. The following alternatives are evaluated in Chapter 6.

- No Project: Required by CEQA
- Alternative 1: Partial Preservation – Incorporation of Building Facades into Project
- Alternative 2: Relocation of Historic Buildings

Table 6-1 in Chapter 6 presents a comparison of Project impacts between the proposed Project and the alternatives. The No Project Alternative would avoid all impacts identified for the proposed Project. Of the other alternatives considered Alternative 1 would best achieve Project objectives, while also reducing the severity of identified significant impacts and therefore, is considered the environmentally superior alternative of the alternatives reviewed. While Alternative 2 would also lessen the severity of the historical resource impact, it may be potentially infeasible due to lack of identified sites to relocate the historic buildings and issues related to disassembling, moving and re-assembling the buildings.

2.5 SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

All impacts identified in the subsequent environmental analyses are summarized in this section. This summary groups impacts of similar ranking together, beginning with significant unavoidable impacts, followed by significant impacts that can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level, followed by impacts not found to be significant. The discussions in the Initial Study of impacts that are not being addressed in detail in the text of the Draft EIR are intended to satisfy the requirement of CEQA Guidelines section 15128 that an EIR “shall contain a statement briefly indicating the reasons that various possible significant effects of a project were determined not to be significant and therefore were not discussed in detail in the EIR.” The Initial Study is included in Appendix A of this EIR. A summary of less-than-significant and no impacts identified in the Initial study is presented at the end of this section.

2.5.1 Significant Unavoidable Impacts

The following impacts were found to be potentially significant, and while mitigation measures have been identified in some cases, the impact cannot be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

Impact CUL-1: Historical Resources. The proposed Project would cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource due to demolition.

Mitigation Measures

Implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2 would reduce the impact, but not to a less-than-significant level; therefore, the impact would remain *significant and unavoidable*. Alternatives to rehabilitate and/or protect the buildings are discussed in Chapter 6.

Mitigation CUL-1: Complete documentation of buildings at 418 and 428 Front Street prior to alteration or demolition in accordance with Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) standards, which includes the following:

- Project proponent shall work with a qualified architectural historian to prepare local-level HABS documentation, as detailed below. HABS level photographs must be completed prior to demolition and construction of the Project. The full HABS documentation must be complete prior to completion of the proposed Project. Copies of the HABS shall be provided to local Santa Cruz repositories.
- *Measured Drawings:* Select existing drawings, where available, should be reproduced on mylar. If existing historic drawings do not exist, a digital and hard copy set of measured drawings that depict the existing size, scale, and dimension of the subject property shall be produced. The measured drawing set shall include a site plan, sections, and other drawings as needed to depict existing conditions of the property. The scope of the drawing package will be reviewed and approved by local Planning Department staff prior to commencement of the task. All drawings shall be created according to the latest HABS Drawings Guidelines by the National Park Service. The measured drawings shall be produced by a qualified professional who meets the standards for architecture set forth by the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (36 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 61).
- *HABS-Level Photographs:* Black and white large format negatives and prints of the interior, exterior, and setting of the subject property shall be produced. The photographs must adequately document the character-defining features and setting of the historic resource. Planning Department staff will review and approve the scope (including views and number) of photographs required prior to the commencement of this task. All photography shall be conducted according to the latest

HABS Photography Guidelines by the National Park Service. The photographs shall be produced by a qualified professional photographer with demonstrated experience in HABS photography.

- *HABS Historical Report*: A written narrative historical report, per HABS Historic Report Guidelines, shall be produced. The report shall include historical information, including the physical history and historic context of the building, and an architectural description of the site setting, exterior, and interior of the building. The report shall be prepared by a qualified professional who meets the standards for history or architectural history set forth by the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards (36 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 61). Archival copies of the drawings, photographs, and report shall be submitted to the Planning Department, and to repositories including but not limited to the San Francisco Public Library, Northwest Information Center, and California Historical Society. This mitigation measure would create a collection of reference materials that would be available to the public and inform future research.

MITIGATION CUL-2:

Prior to the start of Project construction and demolition, the Project proponent shall hire a qualified architectural historian to create an interpretative display plan that addresses the historical significance of the two historical buildings that are being demolished. The interpretative display must be located within the proposed Project boundary along a pedestrian walkway or attached to the new building so that it is visible to the general public. Interpretation typically involves development of interpretive displays about the history of the affected historical resources. These displays may include a high-quality permanent digital interpretive website, or a temporary exhibition or interpretive display installed at a local cultural institution or publicly accessible location on or near the Project site. The interpretive displays illustrate the contextual history and the architecture of the buildings, and of the general building typology (e.g. Commercial Buildings Design in the Automobile Age), and shall include, but not be limited to, historic and contemporary photographs, narrative text, historic news articles and memorabilia, salvaged materials, and maps.

2.5.2 Significant Impacts

The following impacts were found to be potentially significant, but could be reduced to a less-than-significant level with implementation of identified mitigation measures should the City's decision-makers impose the measures on the Project at the time of final action on the Project.

Impact BIO-4: Indirect Impacts to Nesting Birds. Future development as a result of the proposed Downtown Plan amendments could result in disturbance to nesting birds if any are present in the vicinity of construction sites along the San Lorenzo River.

Mitigation Measures

Implementation of the following mitigation measure identified in the Downtown Plan Amendments EIR will be required of the proposed Project.

DPA EIR MITIGATION 4.3-3: Require that a pre-construction nesting survey be conducted by a qualified wildlife biologist if construction, including tree removal, adjacent to the San Lorenzo River is scheduled to begin between March and late July to determine if nesting birds are in the vicinity of the construction sites. If nesting raptors or other nesting species protected under the MBTA are found, construction may need to be delayed until late-August or after the wildlife biologist has determined the nest is no longer in use or unless a suitable construction buffer zone can be identified by the biologist. (Citywide Creeks and Wetlands Management Plan Standard 12).

The following mitigation measures were adopted with the Downtown Plan Amendments and are applicable to development projects in the area covered in the EIR, which includes the Project site. Therefore, the following mitigation measures are also required for the Project. (See Appendix B for further discussion.)

MITIGATION 5-1: *Cumulative Impacts.* Require future development projects within the downtown area to contribute fair-share payments for improvements at the following intersections: Front/Soquel (signal timing and lane modifications); Front/Laurel (westbound lane addition and north and south right-turn overlap), and Pacific/Laurel (southbound left-turn lane addition).

MITIGATION NOISE-1: Require preparation and implementation of acoustical studies for future residential development along Front Street to specify building design features that meet state interior sound levels.

2.5.3 Less-Than-Significant Impacts

The following impacts were found to be less-than-significant. Mitigation measures are not required.

- Impact BIO-1: Indirect Impacts to Special Status Species.** Project development could result in indirect impacts to riparian and aquatic special status species due to increased shading due to increased building heights and stormwater runoff, but would not substantially affect habitats.
- Impact BIO-3: Indirect Impacts to Sensitive Riparian Habitat.** Project development could result in indirect impacts to birds in the area that could lead to bird mortalities.
- Impact CUL-2: Archaeological Resources.** The proposed Project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource.
- Impact CUL-3: Human Remains.** The proposed Project would not disturb human remains.
- Impact CUL-4: Tribal Cultural Resources.** The proposed Project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource.
- Impact GEO-1: Exposure to Seismic Hazards.** The Project would not directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death resulting from seismic ground shaking, landslides, or seismic related ground failure, including liquefaction with implementation of recommendations in the Project geotechnical investigation.
- Impact GEO-2: Soils and Erosion.** The proposed Project would not result in substantial erosion or loss of topsoil.
- Impact GEO-3: Unstable Geologic Units or Soils.** The proposed Project would not be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable or would become unstable as a result of the Project.
- Impact GEO-4: Expansive Soils.** The Project would be located on areas of expansive soils, but would not result in hazards to the Project building or people with implementation of recommendations of the Project geotechnical report.
- Impact ENER-1:** The Project would not result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy.

Impact ENER-2: The Project would not conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.

2.5.4 No Impacts

No impacts were identified for the following issues evaluated in the EIR; see Appendix B for discussion of other topics.

- BIO-2: Wetland Habitat
- BIO-4: Wildlife Corridors
- BIO-5: Conflict with Ordinances
- BIO-6: Conflicts with Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Conservation Plan
- BIO-7: Substantially Reduce Fish or Wildlife Species Habitat
- BIO-8: Cause a Fish or Wildlife Population Decline
- BIO-9: Threaten to Eliminate a Plant or Animal Community
- GEO-1(i): Fault Rupture
- GEO-5: Use of Septic Systems
- LAND-1: Division of Established Community
- LAND-2: Conflicts with Policies and Regulations

2.6 ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED

CEQA Guidelines section 15123 requires the Summary to identify “issues to be resolved including the choice among alternatives and whether or how to mitigate the significant effects.” This EIR has presented mitigation measures and project alternatives, and the City Council will consider the Final EIR when considering the proposed Project. In considering whether to approve the Project, the City Council will take into consideration the environmental consequences of the Project with mitigation measures and project alternatives, as well as other factors related to feasibility. “Feasible” means capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social, and technological factors (State CEQA Guidelines, section 15364). Among the factors that may be taken into account when addressing the feasibility of alternatives are site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries (projects with a regionally significant impact should consider the regional context), and whether the proponent can reasonably acquire, control, or otherwise have access to the alternative site (or already owns the alternative site). No one of these factors establishes a fixed limit on the scope of reasonable alternatives. The concept of feasibility also encompasses the question of whether a particular alternative or mitigation measure promotes the underlying goals and objectives of a project. Moreover, feasibility under CEQA encompasses “desirability” to the

extent that desirability is based on a reasonable balancing of the relevant economic, environmental, social, legal, and technological factors.