

4 EXISTING CONDITION, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

4.1 APPROACH TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

This draft environmental impact report (DEIR) evaluates and discloses the environmental impacts associated with the Resources Building Replacement Project (project), in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000, et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulation, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 1500, et seq.). Sections 4.2 through 4.15 present a discussion of regulatory background, existing conditions, environmental impacts associated with construction and operation of the project, mitigation measures to reduce the level of impact, and residual level of significance (i.e., after application of mitigation, including impacts that would remain significant and unavoidable after application of all feasible mitigation measures). Issues evaluated in these sections consist of the environmental topics identified for review in the Notice of Preparation (NOP) prepared for the project (see Appendix A of this DEIR). Chapter 5, “Cumulative Impacts,” presents an analysis of the project’s impacts considered together with other past, present, and probable future projects producing related impacts, as required by Section 15130 of the State CEQA Guidelines. Chapter 6, “Other CEQA-Mandated Sections” includes an analysis of the project’s growth inducing impacts, as required by Section 21100(b)(5) of CEQA. Chapter 7, “Project Alternatives,” presents a reasonable range of alternatives and evaluates the environmental effects of those alternatives relative to the proposed project, as required by Section 15126.6 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

Sections 4.2 through 4.15 of this DEIR each include the following components.

Regulatory Background: This subsection presents information on the laws, regulations, plans, and policies that relate to the issue area being discussed. Regulations originating from the federal, State, and local levels are each discussed as appropriate.

Existing Conditions: This subsection presents the existing environmental conditions on the project site and in the surrounding area as appropriate, in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125. The discussions of the environmental setting focus on information relevant to the issue under evaluation. The extent of the environmental setting area evaluated (the project study area) differs among resources, depending on the locations where impacts would be expected. For example, traffic impacts resulting from the proposed project are assessed for the local roadway network, whereas biological-resource impacts from the proposed project are assessed for the project site only.

Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures: This subsection presents thresholds of significance and discusses potentially significant effects of the project on the existing environment, including the environment beyond the project boundaries, in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2. The methodology for impact analysis is described, including technical studies upon which the analyses rely. The thresholds of significance are defined and issue areas where the project would have no impact are disclosed and dismissed from further evaluation. Project impacts and mitigation measures are numbered sequentially in each subsection (Impact 4.2-1, Impact 4.2-2, Impact 4.2-3, etc.). A summary impact statement precedes a more detailed discussion of the environmental impact. The discussion includes the analysis, rationale, and substantial evidence upon which conclusions are drawn. The determination of level of significance of the impact is defined in bold text. A “less-than-significant” impact is one that would not result in a substantial adverse change in the physical environment. A “potentially significant” impact or “significant” impact is one that would result in a substantial adverse change in the physical environment; both are treated the same under CEQA in terms of procedural requirements and the need to identify feasible mitigation. Mitigation measures are identified, as feasible, to avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, or compensate for significant or

potentially significant impacts, in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4. Unless otherwise noted, the mitigation measures presented are recommended in the EIR for consideration by the State to adopt as conditions of approval.

Where an existing law, regulation, or permit specifies mandatory and prescriptive actions about how to fulfill the regulatory requirement as part of the project definition, leaving little discretion in its implementation, and would avoid an impact or maintain it at a less-than-significant level, the environmental protection afforded by the regulation is considered before determining impact significance. Where existing laws or regulations specify a mandatory permit process for future projects, performance standards without prescriptive actions to accomplish them, or other requirements that allow substantial discretion in how they are accomplished, or have a substantial compensatory component, the level of significance is determined before applying the influence of the regulatory requirements. In this circumstance, the impact would be potentially significant or significant, and the regulatory requirements would be included as a mitigation measure.

This subsection also describes whether mitigation measures would reduce project impacts to less-than-significant levels. Significant-and-unavoidable impacts (i.e., impacts that cannot be reduced to a less-than-significant level with feasible mitigation) are identified as appropriate in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(b). Significant-and-unavoidable impacts are also summarized in Chapter 6, “Other CEQA-Mandated Sections.”

References: The full references associated with the parenthetical references found throughout Sections 4.2 through 4.15 can be found in Chapter 8, “References,” organized by section number.

4.1.1 Senate Bill 743

The California Legislature adopted a CEQA streamlining bill, Senate Bill No. 743 (SB 743), for residential, mixed-use residential, or employment center projects on infill sites within transit priority areas (Public Resources Code Section 21099[(d)]. As explained further below, the proposed project qualifies for CEQA streamlining benefits provided by SB 743 under each of the three criteria.

CRITERION ONE

The proposed project is a residential, mixed-use residential, or employment center project (Public Resources Code Section 21099, subd. [d]).

SB 743 defines the term “employment center project” as a project located on a property zoned for commercial uses with a floor area ratio of no less than 0.75 and that is located within a transit priority area (PRC Section 20199, subd. [a][1]).

The project site is located on two State-owned blocks located between 7th and 8th and N and O Streets and 7th and 8th and O and P Streets in downtown Sacramento and is subject to the State’s Capitol Area Plan (CAP) (the statutory master plan for development on State-owned land surrounding the State Capitol, in accordance with Government Code Section 8160 et seq.). The northern block is occupied by the Employment Development Department (EDD) Subterranean Building and is identified in the CAP as “office.” The southern block (referred to in this EIR as the “P Street Block”) is occupied by surface parking and the Heilbron House and is also identified in the CAP as “office.” The CAP office development program also identifies the P Street Block for construction of a new office building. The State’s designation of “office” is consistent with a property zoned for commercial uses. For further detail on land use designations, see Section 4. 2 of this DEIR.

The floor area ratio (FAR) for the proposed office building would be approximately 22 (based on approximately 800,000 gross square feet and an approximately 36,000 square foot tower level footprint). A FAR of 22 is well above the minimum 0.75 FAR requirement.

SB 743 defines a “transit priority area” as an area within one-half mile of a major transit stop that is existing or planned, if the planned stop is scheduled to be completed within the planning horizon included in a Transportation Improvement Program adopted pursuant to Section 450.216 or 450.322 of Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations. (PRC Section 20199, subd.[a][7]).

The proposed project site is located within one-half mile of an existing major transit stop. Specifically, the proposed project is located on the blocks directly north and south of the 8th and O Light Rail Station, a split light rail station on the Sacramento Regional Transit District’s Blue, Gold, and Green Lines. Stops for regional bus services are also within one-half mile of the project site, such as Yolo Bus and El Dorado Transit.

Therefore, the proposed project qualifies as an “employment center project” and satisfies Criterion One.

CRITERION TWO

The proposed project is located on an “infill site” as defined by SB 743 (Public Resources Code Section 21099, subd. [d]).

SB 743 defines “infill site” to mean “a lot located within an urban area that has been previously developed, or on a vacant site where at least 75 percent of the perimeter of the site adjoins, or is separated only by an improved public right-of-way from, parcels that are developed with qualified urban uses” (Public Resources Code Section 21099, subd. [a][4]).

The project site is currently developed with surface parking lot, the Heilbron House, and the Subterranean Building. In addition, all adjacent parcels surrounding the project site are developed with urban uses including residential, office, and commercial uses. DGS identified the P Street Block as a superior State-owned site for new development due to its close proximity to the State Capitol, other government agencies, public transit, and other services, and because it is an underutilized infill site. The proposed project is intended to intensify office space on the underutilized P Street Block and allow for consolidation of State agencies in the Capitol Area. For further detail on the project site and project objectives, see Chapter 3, “Project Description.”

Therefore, the proposed project is located on an “infill site” and satisfies Criterion Two.

CRITERION THREE

The proposed project is located within a transit priority area as defined by SB 743 (Public Resources Code Section 21099, subd. [d]), as described in Criterion One.

The proposed project site is located within one-half mile of an existing major transit stop. Specifically, the proposed project is located on the blocks directly north and south of the 8th and O Light Rail Station, a split light rail station on the Sacramento Regional Transit District’s Blue, Gold, and Green Lines. Stops for regional bus services are also within one-half mile of the project site, such as Yolo Bus and El Dorado Transit.

Therefore, the proposed project is located within a “transit priority area” and satisfies Criterion Three.

SB 743 STREAMLINING BENEFITS

As a qualifying employment center project located on an infill site in a transit priority area, SB 743 provides that the project’s:

1. Aesthetic impacts shall not be considered significant impacts on the environment (Public Resources Code Section 21099, subd. [d][1]); and

2. Parking impacts shall not be considered significant impacts on the environment (Ibid).

This streamlining approach has been incorporated into the applicable environmental resource evaluations in this DEIR, namely Section 4.4, "Transportation and Circulation," and Section 4.15, "Aesthetics, Light, and Glare." However, for the purposes of this EIR, SB 743 streamlining benefits are not applied to effects from light and glare as well as shadow (see Section 4.15, "Aesthetics, Light, and Glare").