

BACKGROUND AND MASTER EIR STUDY APPROACH

This chapter summarizes the background and study approach used to prepare this Master EIR. The background chapter provides an overview of the project and information database that were used in developing the Setting descriptions. The organization of the impact analysis is described later in the section.

4.1 BACKGROUND

The Specific Plan was issued as a Public Review Draft in November 1997. It was the culmination of a multi-year planning process involving the community of Bay Point, City of Pittsburg, Contra Costa County, and BART. The background data used in this Master EIR was obtained from many of the recent study products and other background documents available for the Specific Plan area. During the planning process, important background planning documents were prepared in support of the Specific Plan. These documents represent a substantial portion of the background database. These documents include:

- *Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station Area Specific Plan, Current Conditions Report*, August 1, 1996.
- *Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station Area Specific Plan, Inventory of Development and Redevelopment Opportunity Areas*, October 1996.
- *Pittsburg/Bay Point BART Station Area Specific Plan, Alternatives Evaluation Report*, November 1996.

In addition to the above reports, the City of Pittsburg is preparing a general plan update to replace the existing General Plan adopted in 1988. As part of this effort, a report was prepared titled *Pittsburg General Plan Update: Existing Conditions and Planning Issues Report*, June 1998 (“General Plan Update”). Since the data contained in this document are both recent and comprehensive, a substantial portion of the background data for this Master EIR were also obtained from this report. Also, the Draft EIR issued by Contra Costa County for the *Cowell Ranch General Plan Amendment and Related Actions, Volumes I and II*, October 1996, was the source of both background setting data and County policies.

Other Background Documents

The Specific Plan vicinity has been the subject of several environmental studies in the last ten years. These studies are separate from those conducted as part of the Specific Plan process and the City of Pittsburg's General Plan Update. Most notably, these include:

- *Pittsburg-Antioch Corridor, Contra Costa County, California, Alternatives Analysis/Draft EIR*, by BART, 1988.
- *The Draft and Final Subsequent EIS for the Proposed Widening and Lowering of Highway 4 between Willow Pass Road in Concord and Bailey Road in Pittsburg*, by Caltrans, 1991.
- *The Draft and Final EIR on the State Route 4/Bailey Road Interchange Improvement Project*, by Contra Costa County, 1991.
- *Draft and Final Subsequent EIR for the San Marco Subdivision*, City of Pittsburg, 1992.
- *Environmental Assessment for the Oak Hills South, Unit 5 Subdivision*, by the City of Pittsburg, 1997.
- *2000 Update to the Contra Costa Countywide Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Final Action Plan Update, East County*, September 2000.

Preparation of this Master EIR involved a review of the information contained in these documents. Where appropriate, citations are provided to these documents as references.

4.2 MASTER EIR STUDY APPROACH

Specific Plan Zones and Areas

This Master EIR generally presents the setting descriptions in the broader context of the Specific Plan. That is, environmental characteristics are described for the Specific Plan area as a whole; however, where appropriate, the setting information or impact analysis also discusses the Specific Plan as it relates to the four major planning zones and fourteen areas. See Figures 3-5 and 3-6 in Chapter 3: Project Description. These Specific Plan zones and areas are strictly for use with the Specific Plan and this Master EIR. They have no other meaning with regard to County or City of Pittsburg plans, ongoing County redevelopment plans, development or construction phasing, or any other aspects of plan implementation.

Analysis Years

Setting

This Master EIR describes existing conditions for the Specific Plan area. Most of the data contained in the previously cited background studies were collected between 1991 and 2000. Most of the initial information has been updated for use in this Master EIR, and was current through 1998; the transportation data are current as of year 2000 conditions.

Future Context

The Specific Plan will require several years to implement. To realize development densities proposed in the plan, residential rental rates will need time to reach levels adequate to justify the cost of expected investment. Additional funding sources may be needed for the relocation of existing BART surface parking into a multi-level parking garage. Construction of a parking garage would make land available for joint development at the BART station.

Implementation of the Specific Plan will require consultation and cooperation between the City of Pittsburg and Contra Costa County, BART, and investment by the private sector. The year 2010 was chosen as the analysis year to provide a basis for studying potential impacts of plan implementation as well as possible cumulative impacts. The cumulative impact condition is defined as the Specific Plan in conjunction with other known projects and expected growth and development.

Cumulative impacts were evaluated using available regional population and employment projections for the year 2010 made by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). If appropriate, these projections were adjusted to reflect local projections obtained from the City of Pittsburg and Contra Costa County. Since it is uncertain to what extent the development conceived in the plan will be fully built out by the year 2010, the assumption of full buildout in the analysis of impacts may be overstated. Thus, the analysis represents a conservative, worst-case approach as it relates to CEQA. Other assumptions about future conditions are described in the individual environmental topics as appropriate. For example, Chapter 10: Transportation, describes the future traffic network for the short-term horizon of 2005 and long-term horizon of 2010. The East County Model developed by the Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) was used to conduct travel demand model runs of the No Project, Specific Plan, and two new alternatives.

General Organization of this Master EIR

The background information related to the Specific Plan is extensive and spans several years. This Master EIR provides sufficient text and analysis to convey an understanding of the potential impacts of the Specific Plan development. Where appropriate, figures and tables are used to clarify the discussion of impacts. Data sources are cited in the text with numerical endnotes. The complete citation of references is provided at the end of each chapter. Effort has been made to avoid repetition of text and statistics from past documents through the use of citations with the goal of providing key information about potential impacts and mitigation measures. The appendices to this Master EIR also contain supplementary information of possible interest to some readers. Supporting documentation for all analyses and appendices is available for public review at the Contra Costa County Redevelopment Agency, 651 Pine Street, 4th Floor – North Wing, Martinez, California 94553.