

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I.1 PROPOSED ACTIONS

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared in connection with the proposed adoption and implementation of a Redevelopment Plan, as defined by California Community Redevelopment Law, for the purposes of eliminating blight and revitalizing the Montalvin Manor Project Area. The project includes (1) creation of the Montalvin Manor Redevelopment Project Area, (2) adoption of a Redevelopment Plan for the Project Area, and (3) amendments to the General Plan to promote mixed use development on vacant parcels within the Project Area.

The principal purpose of the project is the elimination and prevention of blight through the assistance and encouragement of public and private rehabilitation and redevelopment efforts, and through the provision of new or replacement of existing public improvements, facilities, and utilities within and serving the Project Area. In addition, there will be consideration of a limited General Plan amendment for certain parcels to promote mixed use development opportunities within the proposed Project Area.

The proposed Project Area is located within the unincorporated portion of western Contra Costa County approximately one-half mile south of the City of Pinole. The Project Area consists of a total of approximately 171.5 acres. See Figure 1-1, Location Map; Figure 1-2, Vicinity Map.

I.2 PROCEDURES

This EIR has been prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Guidelines for CEQA Implementation as set forth in the California Administrative Code, Title 14, Chapter (referred to as the CEQA Guidelines.) The lead agency is the Contra Costa County Redevelopment Agency.

CEQA applies to all discretionary projects. CEQA Guidelines Section 15357 defines a discretionary project as one that requires the public agency that would approve or deny the project to exercise judgment. A “project” is an action that has the potential for resulting in a physical change in the environment. CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.

The CEQA process requires that the Lead Agency consider input from other interested agencies, citizen groups and individuals. CEQA provides for a public process requiring full public disclosure of the expected environmental consequences of the proposed action. The public must be given a meaningful opportunity to comment. CEQA also requires monitoring to ensure that mitigation measures identified in the EIR are carried out.

CEQA requires a public review period for commenting on the EIR. Under Section 15105 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the public review period must be at least 30 days (45 days when a Draft EIR is submitted to the State Clearinghouse for review by State agencies), but no longer than 60

days, except in unusual circumstances. A 45-day review period has been established for this Draft EIR. During the review period, any agency, group or individual may comment in writing on the Draft EIR, and the Lead Agency must respond to each comment on significant environmental issues in the Final EIR. Written comments should be addressed as follows:

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County of Contra Costa Community Development Department
651 Pine Street, North Wing - 4th Floor
Martinez, CA 94553

I.3 METHODOLOGY/SCOPE OF EIR

This EIR addresses the potential effects of adopting and carrying out a Redevelopment Plan for the Montalvin Manor Redevelopment Project Area. As stated above, the EIR must be completed for the Contra Costa County Redevelopment Agency and then certified by the Board of Supervisors prior to their adoption of the Redevelopment Plan.

Pursuant to Section 15060(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the Contra Costa County Redevelopment Agency prepared an Initial Study and determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) would be required for this project. The Notice of Preparation (NOP), Initial Study and responses to the NOP are included as Appendix A of this EIR.

Public Resources Code Section 20190(a) provides that an EIR for a redevelopment plan may be a master EIR, program EIR, or project EIR. This EIR has been prepared as a program EIR. A program EIR is an EIR prepared for a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project, and related (1) geographically; (2) logically as a chain of events; (3) in connection with the issuance of rules or regulations that would govern the continuing program; or (4) as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority.

Subsequent activities in connection with redevelopment, such as applications for development of individual vacant parcels within the Project Area, must be examined in light of the program EIR to determine whether additional environmental documentation must be prepared. If the later activity or project would have effects that were not examined in the program EIR, a new initial study would need to be prepared leading to either an EIR or a negative declaration. (CEQA Guidelines Section 15068)

Based on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Initial Study, responses to the NOP and the provisions of Section 15060(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines that the Agency shall focus the EIR on the significant environmental effects of the project, this EIR addresses the following aspects of the environment in the context of possible impacts associated with the implementation of the proposed Redevelopment Plan:

- **Aesthetics.** This issue is addressed in the context of existing conditions and the proposed redevelopment of the Project Area. Because the basic purpose of redevelopment is to eliminate blight conditions, redevelopment projects generally result in beneficial visual and aesthetic impacts on the environment.

- **Air Quality.** Existing air quality conditions and current efforts to maintain State and federal air quality standards are described. Existing major pollution sources in the Project Area are documented, and sensitive receptors for air pollutants within the Project Area are identified. Typical construction-related air quality impacts are identified, and the potential for future impacts on sensitive receptors addressed. Regional changes in emissions due to vehicular travel associated with the project are analyzed, and the significance of changes determined using State standards.
- **Biological Resources.** This section of the EIR addresses potential impacts on plant and wildlife species in the Project Area, including any species of special concern.
- **Cultural Resources.** This section addresses both archaeological and historical resources. Inventories of existing archaeological resources and existing and potentially eligible historic properties are reviewed and incorporated in the EIR.
- **Geology and Soils.** Existing geologic hazards are identified, and project-related effects associated with soil disturbance, potential soil erosion, alteration of topography and potential geologic hazards are analyzed.
- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials.** Information regarding hazardous materials and potentially contaminated sites within the Project Area has been provided. Impacts are related to contaminated properties that might otherwise be available for development or redevelopment, or might be acquired by the Redevelopment Agency for future redevelopment.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality.** The general hydrology of the Project Area is described. The Redevelopment Plan is compared with other County documentation to determine the anticipated change in impacts related to surface runoff, flooding, drainage and ground and surface water quality resulting from the increases in impermeable surfaces and drainage basin response time. Particular attention is focused on flooding and drainage issues as they relate to Garrity Creek. Information regarding Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and the requirements of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System is included.
- **Land Use, Population and Housing.** Redevelopment Plan projects have been compared with the General Plan to determine the extent of potentially significant impacts. As stated in the Project Description, the Redevelopment Agency's intent is to maintain consistency with the existing General Plan. The General Plan has been reviewed for relevant policies, and a determination made whether the Redevelopment Plan would assist in implementing established goals and policies. Land use compatibility and potential changes in population and housing that could occur as a result of redevelopment are considered. The section discusses the potential of the Redevelopment Project and related implementation activities to displace or affect existing housing stock and residents. Impacts concerning these areas are analyzed, when relevant, in the various sections of the EIR that relate to specific types of impact.

- **Noise.** The EIR analyzes noise effects relating to the implementation of the Redevelopment Plan. The Noise Element of the Contra Costa County General Plan has been reviewed to determine applicable noise contours and standards. This section addresses potential noise impacts related to proposed uses that are consistent with the Redevelopment Plan.
- **Public Services, Utilities and Related Facilities.** This section examines the effects associated with the Redevelopment Plan on current and future demand for public services, utilities and related facilities.
- **Transportation.** The EIR evaluates the impacts of the proposed Redevelopment Plan on transportation and circulation within the Project Area and the surrounding area.

I.4 ORGANIZATION OF THE EIR

Chapter Two of this EIR describes the proposed Montalvin Manor Redevelopment Project Area in greater detail and summarizes the general characteristics of the Project Area.

Chapter Three describes specific characteristics of the project's regulatory and environmental setting, organized within the framework of the topical areas of focus described in the paragraphs above. This chapter also identifies and discusses potentially significant project-related impacts on those aspects of the environment, including impacts that may be cumulatively significant, and sets forth mitigation measures for these impacts, as appropriate. The evaluation of impacts is organized in the following manner:

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This section contains a description of the regional and Project Area physical environment as it relates to the specific issue area.

REGULATORY SETTING

This portion of the document identifies federal, state, regional and local regulations that may apply to the proposed project.

IMPACTS

Impact Evaluation Criteria

The standard or threshold by which impacts are measured is identified, with the objective of determining if an impact may be potentially significant. When relevant, construction and project operation impacts are identified and analyzed.

Impact #: Each impact is described and listed by number.

Discussion and Conclusion: This section discusses the identified impact and sets forth the assessment of the impact as less than significant or potentially significant. If the impact is potentially significant, the section sets forth a determination as to whether or not the impact can be avoided or reduced to a less than significant level through implementation of mitigation measures, or whether the impact is unmitigable, unavoidable and/or irreversible.

Mitigation Measure #: Each mitigation measure is described and listed by number.

Effectiveness of Mitigation Measure: This section states whether the recommended mitigation measure will reduce the impact to a less than significant level based on the criteria used in the analysis.

Chapter Four evaluates alternatives to the proposed project, including the no project alternative, as well as feasible alternatives that have the ability to avoid or substantially reduce any significant effects of the project.

Chapter Five addresses mandatory CEQA sections, including environmental effects not found to be significant, unavoidable and irreversible significant impacts of the proposed project, cumulative impacts and growth-inducing impacts.

Following the text of the EIR, several appendices have been included to facilitate full environmental review of the proposed project. The appendices include a listing of those persons who prepared the EIR, materials and sources consulted during the preparation of the EIR, and information concerning Notice of Preparation/Initial Study.

I.5 REGULATORY CONTEXT AND INTENDED USES OF THE EIR

The proposed Redevelopment Plan is a legal document, the content and form of which is largely prescribed by California Community Redevelopment Law. The California Community Redevelopment Law sets forth general activities and implementation procedures that the Contra Costa County Redevelopment Agency may undertake in pursuing the redevelopment process in the Montalvin Manor Redevelopment Project Area.

The Redevelopment Plan incorporates the land uses of the Contra Costa County General Plan (1995-2010) as they currently exist and as they may be changed in the future. The Redevelopment Plan also includes a description of activities that the Agency is permitted to undertake in the redevelopment process. Many of the circumstances existing in the community that would influence the nature and scope of the redevelopment activities the Agency may undertake can be expected to change and evolve over the life of the Redevelopment Plan. The Redevelopment Plan is, therefore, structured to provide the Agency with the maximum legal flexibility in implementing redevelopment in the Montalvin Manor Redevelopment Project Area.

The Final EIR will include responses to comments on the Draft EIR, and any changes or modifications to the Draft EIR. The Final EIR will be prepared following the close of the public review period. Certification of the Final EIR is required prior to adoption of the Redevelopment Plan. The Contra Costa County Planning Commission will review and consider the Draft EIR, along with the proposed Redevelopment Plan, in forwarding a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

In addition to review in conjunction with the Redevelopment Plan and proposed General Plan amendment, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors and Contra Costa County Redevelopment Agency may use this EIR in connection with the later evaluation of potential environmental impacts of specific projects. The proposed project is evaluated in this EIR at the program level, and specific actions that would require the approval of other local, state or federal agencies are not included. At the time such specific actions or activities are identified, the County and other local, state and federal agencies would undertake the appropriate level of review as provided by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).