
2.0 INTRODUCTION

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR or DEIR) was prepared in accordance with and in fulfillment of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines. As described in the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15121(a), an environmental impact report (EIR) is a public informational document that assesses the potentially significant environmental impacts of a project. CEQA requires that an EIR be prepared by the agency with primary responsibility over the approval of a project (the lead agency). The City of South Lake Tahoe (City) is the lead agency for the City of South Lake Tahoe General Plan Update (project). Public agencies are charged with the duty to consider and minimize environmental impacts of proposed development where feasible and have the obligation to balance economic, environmental, and social factors.

2.1 PURPOSE OF THE EIR

The City, acting as the lead agency, has prepared this Draft EIR to provide the public and responsible/trustee agencies with information about the potential environmental effects of the proposed City of South Lake Tahoe General Plan Update. As described in the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15121(a), an EIR is a public informational document that assesses potential environmental effects of the proposed project and identifies alternatives and mitigation measures to the proposed project that could reduce or avoid its adverse environmental impacts.

CEQA requires the preparation of an environmental impact report prior to approving any "project" which 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 (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15378[a]).

The City of South Lake Tahoe has determined that preparation of a DEIR is the appropriate CEQA-required documentation due to the potential for significant environmental impacts that could result from implementation of the proposed City of South Lake Tahoe General Plan Update. This Draft EIR evaluates the existing environmental resources in the vicinity of the city, analyzes potential impacts on those resources due to the proposed project, and if necessary, identifies mitigation measures that could avoid or reduce the magnitude of those impacts. This DEIR will be used to evaluate the direct and indirect environmental effects of subsequent development under the General Plan (i.e., residential development, rezones, commercial structures, park sites, recreation facility development, and infrastructure improvements).

2.2 KNOWN TRUSTEE AND RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES

For the purpose of CEQA, the term "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. Specifically, the following trustee agencies may have an interest in the City of South Lake Tahoe General Plan Update and its implementation:

- California Department of Fish and Game
- California Department of Parks and Recreation
- California State Lands Commission
- California Tahoe Conservancy

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In CEQA, the term “responsible agency” includes all public agencies other than the lead agency that may have discretionary actions associated with the implementation of the City of South Lake Tahoe General Plan Update or an aspect of the project. Since potential future implementation decisions may occur many years from now when the General Plan is in common use, they cannot be known with certainty. However, the following agencies may have some role in implementation of the City of South Lake Tahoe General Plan Update and have been identified as potential responsible agencies:

- California Department of Fish and Game
- California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
- El Dorado County Air Quality Management District (EDCAQMD)
- South Tahoe Public Utility District
- Lake Tahoe Unified School District
- Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA)
- El Dorado Local Agency Formation Commission (El Dorado LAFCo)
- El Dorado County
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- California State Lands Commission
- Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- California Tahoe Conservancy

2.3 TYPE OF DOCUMENT

The CEQA Guidelines identify several types of EIRs, each applicable to different project circumstances. This EIR serves as a Program EIR. Program EIRs are defined by the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15168) as:

[A] series of actions that may be characterized as one large project and may be related either:

- 1) Geographically;*
- 2) As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions;*
- 3) In connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or*
- 4) As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which may be mitigated in similar ways.*

The program-level analysis considers the broad environmental effects of the overall proposed General Plan Update. This DEIR will be used to evaluate subsequent projects (public and private)

under the proposed City of South Lake Tahoe General Plan Update consistent with CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines. When individual projects or activities under the General Plan Update are proposed, the City would be required to examine the projects or activities to determine whether their effects were adequately analyzed in this DEIR.

2.4 INTENDED USE OF THE EIR

This Draft EIR is intended to evaluate the environmental impacts of adoption and implementation of the 2030 South Lake Tahoe General Plan Update. This EIR should be used as the primary environmental document to evaluate all subsequent actions taken by the City. The document will serve as a source of information in the preparation of initial studies for subsequent planning and development proposals, including subsequent environmental review of community plans, for infrastructure provision and individual development proposals, and for public facilities.

2.5 ORGANIZATION AND SCOPE

Sections 15122 through 15132 of the State CEQA Guidelines identify content requirements for Draft and Final EIRs. An EIR must include a description of the environmental setting, an environmental impact analysis, mitigation measures, alternatives, significant irreversible environmental changes, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts. The environmental issues addressed in the Draft EIR were established through review of environmental documentation developed for the project, environmental documentation for nearby projects, and public agency responses to the Notice of Preparation (NOP). This Draft EIR is organized in the following sections:

SECTION 1.0 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section provides a project narrative and identifies environmental impacts and mitigation measures through a summary matrix consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15123.

SECTION 2.0 – INTRODUCTION

This section provides an overview that describes the intended use of the EIR, as well as the review and certification process.

SECTION 3.0 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This section provides a detailed description of the proposed project and project objectives, along with background information and physical characteristics consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15124.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

SECTION 4.0 – ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

This section contains technical analyses relative to each environmental topic. Included in this section is a comprehensive analysis related to impacts and mitigations that correspond to project implementation. Each subsection contains a description of the existing setting of the project area. The environmental topics are summarized as follows:

- Land Use
- Population/Housing/Socioeconomics
- Hazards
- Transportation and Circulation
- Air Quality/Climate Change
- Noise
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Geology, Soils, and Land Capability and Coverage
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Public Services
- Utilities
- Scenic Resources
- Recreation
- Consistency with Plans and Relevant Regulations

SECTION 5.0 – CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

This section discusses the cumulative impacts associated with the proposed project that, when combined with past, present, and reasonably anticipated future events, may have a cumulative impact.

SECTION 6.0 – PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

This section discusses alternatives to the proposed project, including the CEQA mandatory “No Project” alternative, that are intended to avoid or reduce significant environmental impacts of the proposed General Plan Update.

SECTION 7.0 –LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS

This section contains discussions of significant irreversible environmental changes which would be involved in the proposed action should it be implemented as well as unavoidable significant environmental effects, including those that can be mitigated but not reduced to a level of insignificance.

SECTION 8.0 – REPORT PREPARERS

This section lists all authors and agencies that assisted in the preparation of the report by name, title, and company or agency affiliation.

APPENDICES

This section includes all notices and other procedural documents pertinent to the DEIR, as well as all technical material prepared to support the analysis.

2.6 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The review and certification process for the DEIR will involve the following general procedural steps:

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

In accordance with Section 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the City prepared a Notice of Preparation of an EIR for the project on September 16, 2009. The City was identified as the lead agency for the proposed project. The notice was circulated to the public, local, state, and federal agencies, and other interested parties to solicit comments on the proposed project. A scoping meeting was held on October 8, 2009, to receive additional comments. Concerns raised in response to the NOP were considered during preparation of the Draft EIR. The NOP and responses by interested parties are presented in **Appendix A**.

DRAFT EIR

This document constitutes the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR contains a description of the project, description of the environmental setting, identification of project impacts, and mitigation measures for impacts found to be significant, as well as an analysis of project alternatives. Upon completion of the Draft EIR, the City will file the Notice of Completion (NOC) with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to begin the agency and public review period (Public Resources Code, Section 21161).

PUBLIC NOTICE/PUBLIC REVIEW

Concurrent with the NOC, the City will provide public notice of the availability of the Draft EIR for public review and invite comment from the general public, agencies, organizations, and other interested parties. The public review and comment period is sixty (60) days. Public comment on the Draft EIR will be accepted both in written form and orally at public hearings. Notice of the time and location of the hearing will be published prior to the hearing. All comments or questions regarding the Draft EIR should be addressed to:

CITY OF SOUTH LAKE TAHOE
1052 Tata Lane
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150
Attention: Rick Angelocci, Assistant City Manager

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS/FINAL EIR

Following the public review period, a Final EIR (FEIR) will be prepared. The Final EIR will respond to written comments received during the public review period and to oral comments made at any public hearing.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

CERTIFICATION OF THE EIR/PROJECT CONSIDERATION

The City will review and consider the Final EIR. If the City finds that the FEIR is "adequate and complete," the City may certify the FEIR. Upon review and consideration of the FEIR, the City may act upon the proposed General Plan Update. A decision to approve the project would be accompanied by written findings in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15091 and, if applicable, Section 15093. The City would also adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for mitigation measures that have been incorporated into or imposed upon the project to reduce or avoid significant effects on the environment. The Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program will be designed to ensure that these measures are carried out during project implementation.