
4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS AND ASSUMPTIONS USED

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The following is an introduction to the environmental analysis for the proposed City of South Lake Tahoe 2030 General Plan Update, including a cumulative analysis and a discussion of general assumptions used in the environmental analysis. The reader is referred to the individual technical sections of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR or DEIR) (Sections 4.1 through 4.14) for further information on the specific assumptions and methodologies used in the analysis for each particular technical subject.

ANALYSIS ASSUMPTIONS GENERALLY USED TO EVALUATE THE IMPACTS OF THE CITY OF SOUTH LAKE TAHOE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

BASELINE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS ASSUMED IN THE DRAFT EIR

Section 15125(a) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires that an environmental impact report (EIR) include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of a project as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published and the environmental analysis is begun. The State CEQA Guidelines also specify that this description of the physical environmental conditions is to normally serve as the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether impacts of a project are considered significant.

The environmental setting conditions of the City of South Lake Tahoe Planning Area are described in detail in the individual technical sections of the Draft EIR (see Sections 4.1 through 4.14). In general, these sections describe the setting of the City of South Lake Tahoe Planning Area as it existed when the NOP for the proposed General Plan Update was released on September 16, 2009. In addition, the Draft EIR also includes additional setting information that has been updated since the release of the NOP, including information generated in association with the TRPA Regional Plan Update process and the Lake Tahoe total maximum daily load (TMDL) process.

PROJECTIONS ON REVITALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

The proposed General Plan Update establishes the long-term plan for the physical development of the community, premised upon the City's desire to provide incentives for revitalization, economic growth, and urban renewal within existing developed areas of the city as well as upon the development rights (commodities) allocations established by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA). The proposed General Plan Update Land Use and Community Design Element and this section of the Draft EIR describe TRPA's commodity allocations for the City and how these allocations would be distributed within the Planning Area.

TRPA Commodity Allocations

Commercial Floor Area Allocations

The proposed General Plan Update Policy Document contains Policy LU-1.7 which directs the City to pursue an allocation of up to an additional 386,000 square feet of commercial floor area (CFA) above 2009 levels, in order to use it as an incentive for revitalization, economic growth, and urban renewal. This proposed CFA allocation total is based on a 2005 economic study commissioned by the City (RRC Report) which found that the City is losing substantial revenue to nearby cities because it lacks adequate retail spaces that could be used by local-serving businesses. The report concluded that 386,000 square feet of additional retail space is needed to recapture 25 percent of existing retail leakage and accommodate resident and visitor growth over the next 20 years.

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In addition, through public workshops held by the City for the General Plan Update and by TRPA for the Regional Plan Update, as well as through community surveys, the City identified a community desire to improve existing commercial cores and to establish local-serving retail uses. The provision of additional CFA to businesses that wish to revitalize existing properties within the City's community plan areas or to relocate to these areas is one of several incentives the City is developing through the proposed General Plan Update.

The City's current community plans all contain goals of reducing strip commercial development along the highway corridors and concentrating it within community plan areas. However, the incentives provided in the community plans to date have not been very effective. The proposed General Plan Update is intended to augment these incentives to make them more effective.

Table 4.0-1 summarizes the proposed CFA allocations under the proposed General Plan Update. The total CFA amount of 386,000 square feet includes the transfer match incentive identified in proposed General Plan policies LU-2.3, ED-1.9, and ED-2.7 and in Implementation Program IMP-2.6.

**TABLE 4.0-1
FUTURE COMMERCIAL FLOOR AREA (CFA) ALLOCATIONS**

	Community Plan Area				Remaining City Limits	Total
	Tahoe Valley	Bijou/Al Tahoe	Stateline/Ski Run	South "Y" Industrial Tract		
Total New CFA	211,000	55,000	55,000	55,000	10,000	386,000
New allocations from TRPA (non-transfer bonus)	68,500	30,237	42,618	42,618	10,000	193,973
New allocations from TRPA (transfer bonus)	142,500	24,763	12,382	12,382	-	192,027
Total Transferred Existing CFA	47,500	12,382	12,382	12,382	(84,645)	-
Transfer Match Incentive	Transfer: 1 Bonus: 3 Total: 4	Transfer: 1 Bonus: 2 Total: 3	Transfer: 1 Bonus: 1 Total: 2	Transfer: 1 Bonus: 1 Total: 2	-	-
TOTAL CFA	258,500	67,382	67,382	67,382	(74,645)	386,000

As shown in **Table 4.0-1** above, the proposed General Plan Update directs 55 percent (211,000 square feet) of the CFA to the Tahoe Valley Community Plan Area. Forty-three (43) percent (165,000 square feet) of the CFA would be equally distributed among the South Y Industrial Tract, Bijou/Al Tahoe, and Stateline Ski Run Community Plan areas (55,000 square feet each). The remaining CFA (10,000 square feet) would be directed to areas outside of the community plan areas to promote small neighborhood-serving commercial uses.

Residential Allocations

Anticipated new residential development under the proposed General Plan Update is based on Land Use and Community Design Element Policy LU-1.9 that identifies the City's desire to obtain the maximum amount of residential unit allocations that can be allocated by TRPA up to an additional 940 market-rate units and 222 affordable units.

STRUCTURE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

Sections 4.1 through 4.14 of this Draft EIR contain a detailed description of applicable regulations and current environmental setting conditions, an evaluation of the direct and indirect environmental effects resulting from the implementation of the proposed General Plan Update (anticipated development as well as physical environmental effects of implementing policy provisions such as trail improvements), identification of proposed General Plan Update policies and implementation programs, and other existing federal, state, regional, and local regulations that mitigate the environmental effect. Furthermore, Sections 4.1 through 4.14 of this Draft EIR contain additional feasible mitigation measures and identify whether significant environmental effects of the project would remain after application of proposed policies, existing regulations, and feasible mitigation measures. The individual technical sections of the Draft EIR include the following information:

Regulatory Framework

This subsection consists of the identification of applicable federal, state, regional, and local plans, policies, laws, and regulations that apply to the Planning Area and the technical area of discussion.

Affected Environment

This subsection includes a description of the physical setting associated with the technical area of discussion, consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125. As previously identified, the existing setting is based on conditions as they existed when the NOP for the proposed General Plan Update was released on September 16, 2009.

Environmental Consequences, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures

This subsection identifies direct and indirect environmental effects associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan Update. Standards of significance are identified and used to determine whether the environmental effects are considered “significant” and require the application of mitigation measures. Each environmental impact analysis is identified numerically (e.g., Impact 4.1.1 – Potential Division of an Established Community) and is supported by substantial evidence. The Draft EIR also addresses impacts resulting from the implementation of proposed General Plan Update policies and implementation programs that could result in physical effects to the environment.

Mitigation measures for the proposed General Plan Update were developed through an exhaustive review of the environmental effects of the proposed General Plan Update by consultants with technical expertise as well as by environmental professionals. The mitigation measures identified consist of performance standards that identify clear requirements that would avoid or minimize significant environmental effects (the use of performance standard mitigation is allowed under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a) and is supported by case law: *Rio Vista Farm Bureau Center v. County of Solano* ([1st Dist. 1992] 5 Cal. App. 4th at pp. 371, 375–376 [7 Cal. Rptr. 2d 307])).

APPROACH TO THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 requires that EIRs include an analysis of the cumulative impacts of a project when the project’s effect is considered “cumulatively considerable,” under CEQA criteria. The analysis of cumulative impacts for each environmental factor can employ

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one of two methods to establish the effects of other past, current, and probable future projects. A lead agency may select a list of projects, including those outside the control of the agency. These projects may be from an adopted general plan or related planning document, or from a prior environmental document that has been adopted or certified, and they may describe or evaluate regional or area-wide conditions contributing to the cumulative impact. This Draft EIR utilizes both methods.

Definition of Cumulative Setting

The cumulative setting conditions considered in this Draft EIR are based on:

- **Land Use Plans.** These are the existing land use plans in the region, consisting of TRPA's Regional Plan and El Dorado County's General Plan.
- **Related Projects.** These includes current large-scale proposed and approved development projects and land use plans in the region (see **Table 4.0-2**). This list is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of development and planning activities in the area, but rather a general description of current development activities.
- **Effect of Regional Conditions.** This includes consideration of background traffic volumes and patterns on regional and state highways (e.g., US Highway 50 and State Route 89), background air quality conditions, and other associated environmental conditions that occur within the region, both inside and outside of the Planning Area. This includes consideration of current TRPA plans, programs (e.g., Community Enhancement Program), and regulations as well as the proposed Regional Plan Update.
- **Consideration of Existing Development Patterns.** This includes consideration of the current environmental conditions of existing development and past land use activities in the region. As noted in some of the technical sections of this Draft EIR, previous development in the Planning Area and other areas in the Lake Tahoe Basin has resulted in existing degraded environmental conditions. This includes major land uses and activities in the City of South Lake Tahoe and its associated Sphere of Influence (SOI).

Section 5.0 of the Draft EIR contains the cumulative impact analysis for the proposed General Plan Update, including descriptions of the cumulative setting's geographic extent based on the characteristics of the environmental issue under consideration as set forth in Section 15130(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines.

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**TABLE 4.0-2
RELATED PROJECTS**

Project Name	Project Location	Project Description	Status of Project
South Lake Tahoe Lakeview Commons (formerly known as 56-acre Project)	City of South Lake Tahoe where Highway 50 meets Lake Tahoe	The Lakeview Commons project will provide visitors and residents alike with a world-class open space and civic gathering place. The project will be the centerpiece of the community's efforts to develop a sustainable and vibrant environment and economy. The property will continue to be utilized for public use, access, and recreation.	Phase 1 approved; future phases proposed
Bijou Area Erosion Control Project	Bijou Meadow, Bijou Park Creek, and Keller Canyon	The Bijou Area Erosion Control Project is a stormwater quality improvement project for a developed area in the eastern portion of the City of South Lake Tahoe. The project is a part of TRPA's Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) No.172.	Proposed
Chateau at Heavenly Village	U.S. Highway 50 and Stateline Avenue across from the Heavenly Village and Gondola	Two hotel-condominiums with 477 rooms, 50,000-square-foot entertainment venue with an additional 21,000-square-foot pre-event area, 57,000 square feet of retail/restaurant space, 16,193-square-foot spa, village green public park/plaza, 717-space underground parking garage, and proposed pedestrian overpass across Highway 50.	Approved
Upper Truckee River Restoration and Golf Course Reconfiguration Project	1.5-mile-long reach of the Upper Truckee River that includes the Lake Tahoe Golf Course – the restoration would extend from the river's upstream entry point at the southern boundary of Washoe Meadows State Park to just west of U.S. Highway 50 where the river exits Lake Valley State Recreation Area.	California State Parks and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation are pursuing a restoration project along the Upper Truckee River. The project is being planned and proposed by State Parks.	Proposed; EIS/EIR being prepared currently
Upper Truckee Marsh Restoration	The project area includes roughly the portion of river and marsh north of U.S. Highway 50 to the river's outlet into Lake Tahoe.	Proposed restoration of a portion of the Upper Truckee River and marsh area.	Approved
Sierra Colina Multi-Family Dwelling Project	Undeveloped 18-acre parcel (APN# 1318-23-301-001) in Stateline, Nevada	Fifty (50) residential units including 21 duplexes and 8 single-family buildings. All units would be 2 stories high. Nine of the 50 proposed homes would be deed-restricted moderate-income homes mixed among the market-priced homes. Proposed vehicle access to the project site would be from two locations on Lake Village Drive.	Approved
TRPA's Regional Transportation Plan	Tahoe Basin	The plan will shape funding and transportation planning decisions for the area through the year 2030.	Adopted

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Project Name	Project Location	Project Description	Status of Project
Redevelopment Project Area 2	City of South Lake Tahoe, Tahoe Valley area	Redevelopment plan for the approximately 1,860-acre Tahoe Valley area to abate the relative stagnation and conditions of blight in the area.	Adopted
Tahoe Valley Community Plan	City of South Lake Tahoe, Tahoe Valley area	The plan will function as a commercial land use plan to implement the City's General Plan and TRPA's Regional Plan within the Tahoe Valley area.	Proposed; EIS/EIR in process
TRPA Regional Plan Update	Tahoe Basin	Comprehensive update of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Regional Plan.	Proposed
El Dorado to Ski Run Bicycle Path (ED2STR)		Proposed Class I bicycle path.	Proposed IS/ND in process
South Tahoe Gateway Shared-Use Trail	South Lake Tahoe	Construct a 9.6-mile long shared-use trail that will provide south shore residents and visitors with a non-motorized, alternative transportation corridor from Meyers, California to Stateline, Nevada.	Proposed; EIS/EIR in process
Edgewood Hotel and Golf Course Realignment Project	Stateline	230-unit full service hotel complex and accessory uses. Project includes golf course fairway relocation, transfer of development rights from off-site properties, and modifications to parking.	Proposed; EIS in process
Lake Tahoe Biomass Energy Facility	Kings Beach	Proposed 1-3 megawatt biomass energy facility.	Proposed; EIS/EIR in process

Consideration of Cumulative Impacts

Section 5.0 of the Draft EIR considers whether the proposed General Plan Update's effect on anticipated cumulative setting conditions is cumulatively considerable (i.e., a significant effect). "Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[a][3]). Cumulative impacts are based on the proposed General Plan Update's contribution to development compared with the cumulative baseline condition. The determination of whether the proposed General Plan Update's impact on cumulative conditions is considerable is based on a number of factors, including consideration of applicable public agency standards, consultation with public agencies, and expert opinion.

COMMON TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR uses the following terminology to describe the environmental effects of the proposed General Plan Update:

Less Than Significant Impact: A less than significant impact would cause no substantial change in the physical condition of the environment (no mitigation would be required for project effects found to be less than significant).

Significant Impact and Potentially Significant Impact: A significant impact would cause (or would potentially cause) a substantial adverse change in the physical conditions of the environment. Significant impacts are identified by the evaluation of project effects using

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specified standards of significance provided in each technical section of the DEIR. Identified significant impacts are those where the project would result in an impact that can be measured or quantified, while identified potentially significant impacts are those impacts where an exact measurement of the project's effects cannot be made but substantial evidence indicates that the impact would exceed standards of significance. A potentially significant impact may also be an impact that may or may not occur and where a definite determination cannot be foreseen. Mitigation measures and/or project alternatives are identified to avoid or reduce project effects to the environment to a less than significant level.

Significant and Unavoidable Impact: A significant and unavoidable impact would result in a substantial negative change in the environment that cannot be avoided or mitigated to a less than significant level if the project is implemented.

Less Than Cumulatively Considerable Impact: A less than cumulatively considerable impact would cause no substantial change in the physical condition of the environment under cumulative conditions.

Cumulatively Considerable Impact: A cumulatively considerable impact would result when the incremental effects of an individual project result in a significant adverse physical impact on the environment under cumulative conditions.

Proposed General Plan Update: The proposed General Plan Update is the proposed project and includes the background report, the policy document consisting of eight elements, and the Land Use Diagram.

Planning Area: The proposed General Plan Planning Area includes the City of South Lake Tahoe and the City's Sphere of Influence. The Planning Area consists of approximately 40 square miles (25,383 acres) of land located in the eastern portion of El Dorado County (see **Figure 3.0-1**).

Standards of Significance: A set of significance criteria to determine at what level or "threshold" an impact would be considered significant. Significance criteria used in this EIR include the State CEQA Guidelines; TRPA's Environmental Checklist; factual or scientific information; regulatory performance standards of local, state, and federal agencies; and City goals, objectives, and policies. Specified significance criteria used by the City of South Lake Tahoe are identified at the beginning of the impact analyses in each technical section of the Draft EIR.

Subsequent Projects/Activities: These are anticipated development projects (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial, or recreational projects) that could occur in the future as a result of the implementation of the proposed General Plan Update, due to the continuation and potential expansion of land use activities (such as agricultural operations), or as a result of changes from the land use designations of the existing General Plan. These projects could also include public infrastructure and utility extension projects including, but not limited to, roadway widening and extensions, intersection improvements, and water, stormwater, and wastewater distribution improvements.

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INFORMATION UTILIZED IN THIS EIR

This Draft EIS/EIR utilizes technical information and analyses from technical reports and other documents that are relevant to the consideration of environmental effects of the proposed City of South Lake Tahoe 2030 General Plan Update, which is supported by the State CEQA Guidelines (see Sections 15148 [Citation] and 15150 [Incorporation by Reference]). This document and other referenced materials are available for review upon request at the following location:

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