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# **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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This Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15132). The City of South Lake Tahoe (City) is the lead agency for the environmental review of the proposed City of South Lake Tahoe General Plan Update (General Plan Update; proposed project; project) and has the principal responsibility for approving the project. This FEIR assesses the expected environmental impacts resulting from approval and implementation of the proposed project, as well as responds to comments received on the Draft EIR (DEIR).

### 1.1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE EIR

#### OVERVIEW OF CEQA REQUIREMENTS FOR PREPARATION OF AN EIR

The City, acting as the lead agency, has prepared this 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]). With respect to the proposed General Plan Update, the City has determined that the proposed action is a project within the definition of CEQA.

#### PROJECT SUMMARY

The proposed project is the adoption and implementation of an updated General Plan for the City of South Lake Tahoe. The updated City of South Lake Tahoe General Plan would replace the existing General Plan, which was adopted in 1999, and is consistent with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's (TRPA) 1987 Regional Plan. The proposed General Plan Update is based on the foundation of the City's Smart Growth Principles and is intended to be consistent with the intent and general approach of the TRPA Regional Plan Update process.

The proposed City of South Lake Tahoe General Plan Update comprises a Land Use Diagram and policy document that contains ten elements. Each of the elements identifies goals and associated policies and action items. State law requires that general plans address seven topics: land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. The proposed General Plan Update covers each of these topics except housing, plus several additional issues, for a total of ten elements. An updated Housing Element was adopted by the City on December 9, 2008, and is not part of this update.

Please refer to Section 3.0, Project Description, of the Draft EIR for a detailed discussion of the proposed project.

#### BACKGROUND OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS OF THE PROJECT

The following is an overview of the environmental review process for the proposed General Plan Update that has led to the preparation of this FEIR.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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### **Notice of Preparation and Initial Study**

In accordance with Section 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the City prepared and released a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of this EIR on September 16, 2009. The City of South Lake Tahoe was identified as the lead agency for the proposed project. The NOP was circulated to the public, local, state, and federal agencies, and other interested parties for 30 days to solicit comments on the proposed project (SCH No. 2009092049). The NOP and full text of responses to the NOP are presented in Appendix A of the Draft EIR. An Initial Study for the project was prepared and released for public review along with the NOP. Its conclusions supported preparation of an EIR for the project. The Initial Study is also included in Appendix A of the Draft EIR. After releasing the NOP, a public scoping session 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.

### **Draft EIR**

The Draft EIR (DEIR) was released for a 60-day public and agency review on September 13, 2010, with the review period set to end on November 12, 2010. The DEIR 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. The DEIR was provided to interested public agencies and the public and was made available for review at the City offices and on the City's website.

### **Final EIR**

The City received comment letters from public agencies, interest groups, and the public regarding the Draft EIR. This document responds to the written comments received as required by CEQA. This document also contains minor edits to the Draft EIR, which are included in Section 4.0, Minor Revisions to the Draft EIR, as well as minor edits to the proposed General Plan, which are included in Section 5.0, Minor Revisions to the General Plan. This document constitutes the FEIR.

### **Certification of the Final 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.

## **1.2 INTENDED USES OF THE EIR**

The EIR is intended to evaluate the environmental impacts of adoption and implementation of the proposed General Plan Update. This EIR, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126, 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.

#### KNOWN RESPONSIBLE AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

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 proposed 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 (CDFG)
- 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

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

### **1.3 ORGANIZATION AND SCOPE OF THE FINAL EIR**

This document is organized in the following manner:

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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### **SECTION 1.0 – INTRODUCTION**

Section 1.0 provides an overview of the EIR process to date and what the FEIR is required to contain.

### **SECTION 2.0 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Section 2.0 includes an updated Executive Summary that provides a brief project description and presents a summary table of probable environmental effects of the project.

### **Section 3.0 – COMMENTS AND RESPONSES TO COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT EIR**

Section 3.0 provides a list of commenters, copies of written comments (coded for reference), and the responses to those written comments made on the Draft EIR.

### **Section 4.0 – MINOR REVISIONS TO THE DRAFT EIR**

Section 4.0 provides a list of minor edits made to the Draft EIR as a result of comments received.

### **SECTION 5.0 – MINOR REVISIONS TO THE GENERAL PLAN**

Section 5.0 provides a list of minor edits made to the proposed General Plan by City staff or as a result of comments received that may require further environmental analysis.