

CHAPTER IV

Environmental Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Introduction to the Environmental Analysis

Overall Scope of Analysis

This chapter includes the environmental analysis for topics that, according to the 2007 Oak Knoll Project Initial Study Environmental Review Checklist (referred to throughout at “Initial Study”) and Notice of Determination (NOD), required additional environmental review in a Supplemental EIR (SEIR), in accordance with Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21166 and CEQA Guidelines Sections 15162 and 15163. This additional environmental review is being conducted to evaluate certain potential environmental effects of the proposed Oak Knoll Master Plan. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter III (Project Description), the NOP process and Initial Study concluded that additional environmental review shall be conducted for the following topics, which are analyzed in this chapter:

- Aesthetics (scenic vistas; scenic resources; and visual quality and character);
- Air Quality (except odors, which are addressed in the Initial Study);
- Cultural Resources (historic resources);
- Noise (project and cumulative noise¹); and
- Traffic and Circulation.

Each analysis section in this chapter addresses the following:

- 1) **Current Environmental Setting and Conditions** (existing baseline conditions, regulatory background, and any substantial changes or new information of substantial importance);
- 2) **Changed Circumstances or New Information of Substantial Importance**, pursuant to PRC Section 21166 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15162, that could result in the proposed project having a new significant impact not previously identified for the Maximum Capacity Alternative in the 1998 EIS/EIR.

¹ The Initial Study indicated that the SEIR would only address cumulative ambient noise impacts, however, the SEIR fully analyzes project-level ambient noise impacts beyond that presented in the Initial Study.

- 3) **1998 EIS/EIR Impacts, Mitigation Measures, and Conclusions** identified for the Maximum Capacity Alternative in the 1998 EIS/EIR;
- 4) **Proposed Project Impact Analysis** (direct, indirect or secondary, short-term, and cumulative) that could result from the proposed project, and **Mitigation Measures** that would reduce or eliminate adverse effects, to the extent feasible mitigation is identified; this discussion also addresses the extent to which any changes to the project since publication of the Initial Study would affect specific impacts.
- 5) **Comparison of Impacts**, which summarizes the comparative impacts of the Maximum Capacity Alternative in the 1998 EIS/EIR and the Proposed Project (see *Comparison of Environmental Impacts* below).
- 6) **Comparison of Project Impacts with Pre-Base Closure Conditions**, although not required by CEQA, some of the analysis sections include a comparison of project impacts to impacts that would occur as compared to a baseline condition of the fully-operational NMCO property prior to its closure in 1996 (discussed in greater detail below).

The significance thresholds or criteria used to assess the significance of adverse environmental effects are identified (see *Significance Thresholds* discussed below), and the significance of the impact prior to and after implementation of mitigation measures is reported. A conclusion is provided for each criterion of whether the proposed project would result in a new significant (and unavoidable) impact not previously identified for the Maximum Capacity Alternative in the 1998 EIS/EIR.

Overall Approach to Analysis

Overall, the analysis provided in this SEIR has been prepared in accordance with CEQA, as amended (Public Resources Code Section 21000), and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations). The analysis addresses the potential impacts on topics 1 through 4 identified above that would result from the phased development of the entire Oak Knoll Project site.

Environmental Baseline Under CEQA

CEQA provides that under certain circumstances involving a base reuse project, a local government may determine whether the reuse project will have a significant impact in the context of the physical conditions that existed at the time the federal government made the decision to close the particular base (a “pre-closure baseline”). This could include for example, the vehicle trips generated from the base when the closure decision was made (in the case of Oak Knoll, 1996). The 1998 EIS/EIR did include some impact assessments based on a comparison to pre-closure conditions, although it did not establish a definitive pre-closure baseline for all environmental conditions.

The City has determined that while CEQA might permit the use of a pre-closure baseline in this SEIR, given all the circumstances, use of such a pre-closure baseline might add unnecessary confusion to the assessment and discussion of the Oak Knoll project's environmental impacts. Thus, for the purpose of this SEIR, the assessment of whether the Oak Knoll project would have significant impacts, and how and whether any such impacts could be mitigated to a less than significant level, will be made by comparison of the project to the conditions existing at the present time – that is, a closed military facility that generates little or no traffic (except for the minor levels generated by the Seneca Center and the Coast Guard Credit Union). However, while the required determinations regarding significant impacts will be made in the context of existing conditions, in appropriate sections (including transportation, air, and noise), the SEIR also will identify the pre-closure conditions and how the Oak Knoll project's impacts would compare to these pre-closure conditions. This pre-closure comparison information will assist decision makers and the community in understanding how the project's impacts would compare with conditions prevailing when the Oak Knoll naval facility was operating in 1996.

The Initial Study indicated that the City had decided to determine the significance of impacts using a pre-closure environmental baseline (Initial Study, p. 18). This statement was written prior to the City's decision not to utilize such a pre-closure baseline. However, the City has thoroughly reviewed the Initial Study and concluded that while the Introduction to the Initial Study had stated that a pre-closure baseline would be used, in fact only one topic, project-level roadway noise, in the Initial Study actually relied upon a pre-closure baseline to reach its conclusions, and that topic is reanalyzed within this SEIR. Therefore none of the conclusions in the Initial Study would be changed by the City's current decision not to rely on the 1996 pre-closure baseline conditions for the impacts analysis.

Cumulative Context

A cumulative impact occurs when the impact of two or more individual impacts (even though the impact may not be significant individually), when considered together, are substantial or compound or increase other environmental impacts. The cumulative analysis is intended to describe the “incremental impact of the project when added to other, closely related past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future projects” that can result from “individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time (CEQA Guidelines Section 15355). (Also see *Impact Overview* discussion in Chapter VII). The geographic context for the cumulative analyses is identified within the cumulative impact discussion for each environmental topic.

To establish the overall cumulative context for most analysis topics in this SEIR based on information available to the City at the time this document was being prepared, the City of Oakland utilized its detailed Oakland Cumulative Growth Scenario and Land Use Database. Use of the database ensures that updated cumulative impacts are appropriately considered within the context of future citywide and regional growth and development. The City's updated growth scenario and land use database incorporates 2000 Census data, recent projections series from the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), and considers foreseeable future development

projects in the area, as detailed in **Appendix H** to this SEIR. In addition, the City has compiled proposed, approved, and reasonably foreseeable development projects that the City expects to be completed in Oakland by 2025, the cumulative analysis year for this SEIR.

Significance Thresholds

The City of Oakland has established local Thresholds/Criteria of Significance Guidelines (referred to as “Thresholds”), which have been in general use by the City since at least 2002. The Thresholds are intended, to help clarify and standardize analysis and decision-making in the environmental review process in the City of Oakland. The Thresholds/Criteria are offered as guidance in preparing all environmental review documents, such as this SEIR and are intended to implement and supplement provisions in the CEQA Guidelines for determining the significance of environmental effects, including Sections 15064, 15064.5, 15065, 15382 and Appendix G. The Thresholds/Criteria form the basis of the City’s Initial Study and Environmental Review Checklist, and the City conducted a comprehensive update of the Thresholds/Criteria in May 2007. In cases where the Thresholds/Criteria from the Oak Knoll Initial Study have been modified, these are discussed in this SEIR. The Thresholds are used to evaluate the proposed project in this SEIR, as there are no unique factors that warrant the use of different thresholds.

Classifications of Impact Significance

The following level of significance classifications are used throughout this SEIR:

- **Significant (S)** – The impact of the project is expected to reach or exceed the defined threshold of significance. Feasible mitigation measures may or may not be identified to reduce the significant impact to a less-than-significant level.
- **Potentially Significant (PS)** – The impact of the project may reach or exceed the defined threshold of significance; however, it is not certain that, even in the theoretical worst-case conditions, a significant impact would occur. Feasible mitigation measures may or may not be identified to reduce the potentially significant impact to a less-than-significant level.
- **Significant and Unavoidable (SU)** – The impact of the project reaches or exceeds the defined threshold of significance. No feasible mitigation measure is available to reduce the significant impact to a less-than-significant level. In these cases, feasible mitigation measures are identified to reduce the significant impact to the maximum extent feasible, and the significant unavoidable classification is noted.
- **Less than Significant (LTS)** – The impacts of the project either before or after implementation of feasible mitigation measures do not reach or exceed the defined threshold of significance. Generally, no additional mitigation measures are required. The 1998 EIS/EIR refers to this classification as “nonsignificant”.
- **Beneficial Impact (B)** – The impact of the project would improve the environment, regardless of the defined threshold of significance. Generally, no mitigation measures are required or identified.

- **No Impact (N)** – No noticeable adverse effect on the environmental would occur.

Comparison of Environmental Impacts

The comparison of potential environmental effects that may result with the Oak Knoll Project to the effects identified previously for the 1998 Maximum Capacity Alternative conducted in this SEIR is intended to determine if circumstances exist that could result in the proposed project having a new significant environmental impact not previously identified in the 1998 EIS/EIR. For each topic, the SEIR will conclude one of the following for the proposed project:

- **No New Impact or Changes** - The proposed project would result in substantially the same impact (significant or otherwise) as identified for the Maximum Capacity Alternative in the 1998 EIS/EIR.
- **No New Impact, but New or Updated Mitigation Measure Identified** - The proposed project would result in substantially the same impact (significant or otherwise) as identified for the Maximum Capacity Alternative in the 1998 EIS/EIR, but mitigation measures are added or revised due to changes proposed by the City (e.g., methodologies and standard practices) or to update performance or regulatory standards.
- **New Impact, but Less Than Significant with Mitigation** - The proposed project would result in a new or substantially more severe significant impact, new information, or changes in circumstances that were not identified for the Maximum Capacity Alternative in the 1998 EIS/EIR; however the new impact is reduced to less than significant with new or revised mitigation measures.
- **New Significant Impact, Unmitigable** - The proposed project would result in a new or substantially more severe significant impact, based on changes to the project, new information, or changes in circumstances that were not identified for the Maximum Capacity Alternative in the 1998 EIS/EIR; however no feasible mitigation measure reduces the new impact to less than significant.

Comparison of 1998 EIS/EIR Maximum Capacity Alternative to Proposed Project

As discussed in detail in Chapter I (as well as in the Initial Study provided as **Appendix A** to this SEIR), the analysis in this SEIR compares the environmental effects of the Maximum Capacity Alternative analyzed in the 1998 EIS/EIR to the proposed project. The intent is to assess the relative impacts of the proposed project relative to the findings in the previously certified 1998 EIS/EIR. The Maximum Capacity Alternative is the base reuse alternative analyzed in the 1998 EIS/EIR that the City considers most closely resembles the overall land use program of the proposed project.

The 1998 EIS/EIR analyzed four reuse alternatives for development of the NMCO property, including the Maximum Capacity Alternative which was the “Preferred Alternative” that reflected the Oakland Base Reuse Authority’s (OBRA’s) goals and the estimated *maximum* site

development envisioned to occur on the property.² The conceptual plan for the Maximum Capacity Alternative is shown below in **Figure IV-1**, and the development program is detailed below in **Table IV-1**, which shows the differences between the two scenarios. In particular, the Oak Knoll Project proposes approximately 376 more residential units and approximately 318,000 fewer square feet of non-residential (commercial, retail, civic) development. The Oak Knoll Project does not include a golf course facility that was a major component (54 acres) of the Maximum Capacity Alternative and the Oak Knoll Project includes approximately 18 more acres of publicly-accessible open space. Of the 584 total residential units proposed under the Maximum Capacity Alternative, 250 were identified as “golf course units” integral to the golf course facility. The Maximum Capacity Alternative also proposed to develop residential units on the north and south ends (i.e., the Northern End and Admiral’s Hill) of the Eastern Ridge of the NMCO property, while the proposed project proposes to develop residential units in the Central Area of the Eastern Ridge as well. (See **Figure IV.A-3** in Section IV.A, *Aesthetics*, which delineates the specific areas of the Eastern Ridge.) The 1998 EIS/EIR did not specifically describe proposed improvements to Rifle Range Creek as part of the Maximum Capacity Alternative. However, the discussion in that document refers to potential “restoration activities” and the potential removal of native vegetation and sensitive habitat surrounding the creek and its tributaries.

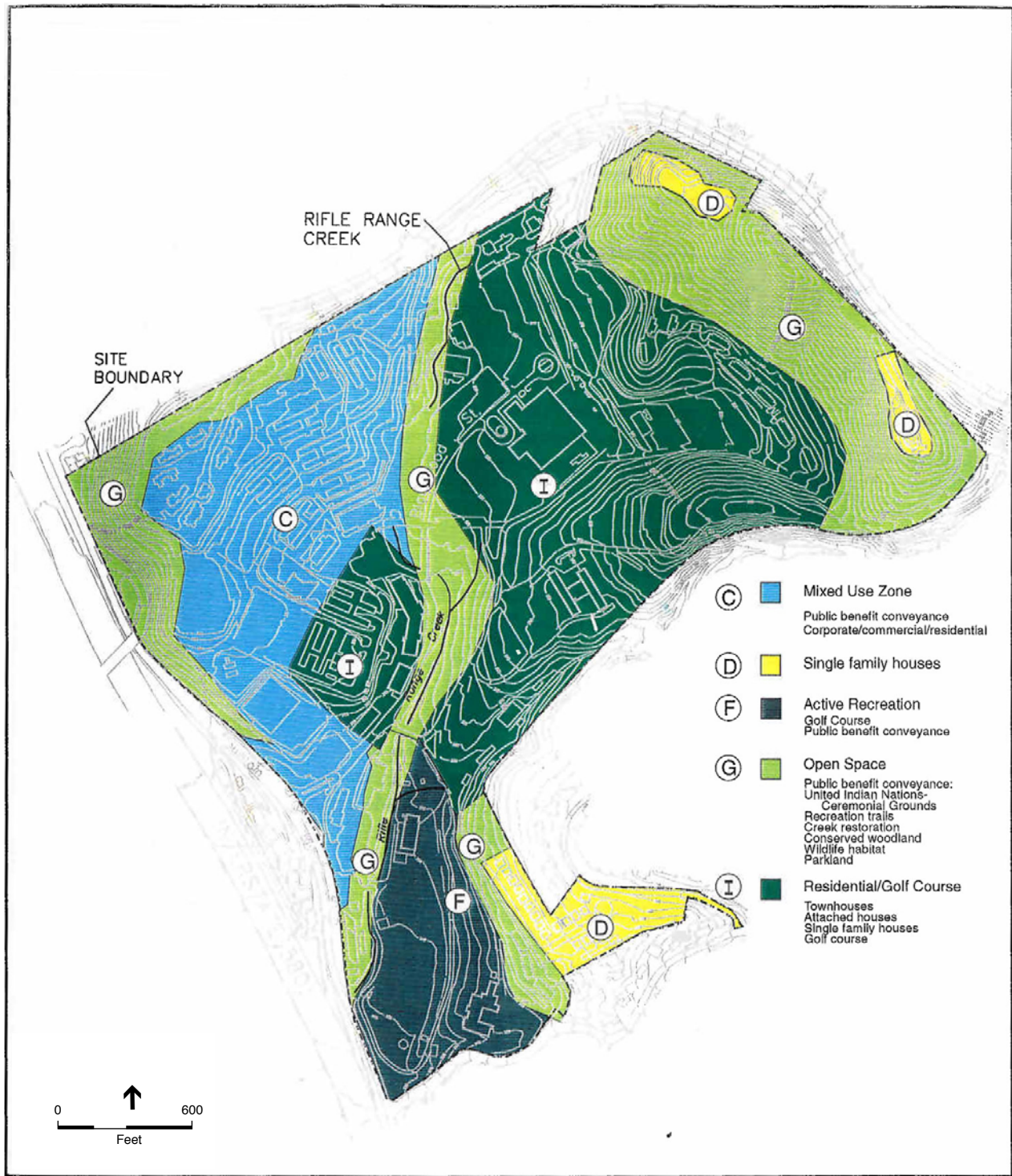
As mentioned above, the City has determined that, while different in certain respects, the proposed project closely reflects the overall land use program of the 1998 EIS/EIR Maximum Capacity Alternative sufficiently to make the environmental impacts very similar. Key similar characteristics include the overall types and distribution of land uses, the extent of site disturbance due to the required grading, and overall intensity and density of development. Certain characteristics of the proposed project and certain new circumstances and new information differ from those of the Maximum Capacity Alternative, but the conditions under PRC Section 21166 or CEQA Guidelines Section 15612 requiring further analysis in an SEIR were not met for most of those topics. (See *CEQA Context* discussion in Chapter I, Introduction.)

Designation of Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Impacts

This SEIR identifies all impact statements using an alphanumeric designation that corresponds to the environmental topic (e.g., “AES-1” for aesthetics). The alpha designation is followed by a number, which continues the sequence of the impacts previously identified in the Initial Study, within a particular environmental topic. For example, “Impact CUL-3” is the third cultural resources impact identified in this SEIR; “Impact CUL-1” and “CUL-2” were designated in the Initial Study. All SEIR impact statements are in bold text.

² The other three reuse alternatives analyzed in the 1998 EIS/EIR were a Mixed Use Village, a Single use Campus, and a Residential Alternative. Each is described in the Alternatives analysis in Chapter V of this SEIR.



| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (A) Educational | (E) Retail |
| (B) Cultural Meeting | (F) Active Recreation |
| (C) Mixed Use | (G) Open Space |
| (D) Housing | (H) Office/Research |
| | (I) Residential/Golf Course |

SOURCE: NCMO EIS/EIR, 1998; OBRA, 1996

Oak Knoll Mixed Use Community Plan Project . 206232
Figure IV-1
 1998 EIS/EIR Maximum Capacity Alternative Plan

**TABLE IV-1
 COMPARISON OF MAXIMUM CAPACITY ALTERNATIVE AND PROPOSED OAK KNOLL PROJECT**

| | 1998 EIS/EIR Maximum Capacity Alternative | Oak Knoll Mixed Use Master Plan |
|--|--|---|
| Residential | 584 Units – 250 mixed-type residential units (golf course) – 34 single family residential units – 300 apartments in Mixed Use Zone | 960 Units – 538 multifamily housing types – 422 single family housing types |
| Mixed Use (Non Residential Components) | Mixed Use Zone: 400,000 square feet – 300,000 sq.ft. office – 100,000 sq.ft. commercial – 8.25 acres civic use (including Seneca, potentially expanded) | Mixed Use Village Center: 82,000 square feet – 76,000 sq.ft. (retail anchor [grocery store] and anchor-supporting retail commercial use) – 6,000 sq.ft. restaurant |
| Open Space, Recreation | 32 acres of open space – Parkland – Recreation trails (including along creek) – Ceremonial grounds – Conservation areas (including wildlife habitat areas along creek and Oak woodlands) 44,000 sq.ft. of other active recreation space – Indoor: Reuse of Club Knoll and swimming pool – Outdoor: Tennis courts, baseball and soccer fields, picnic area 54-acre golf course | 50 acres of publicly-accessible open space – Parks – Recreation trails and bicycle pathways (including along creek) – Conservation areas (including along creek and Oak woodlands) Other recreation space – Indoor: Rehabilitation and reuse of Club Knoll – Outdoor: Tennis courts, play fields No golf course |
| Creek Improvements | Riparian habitat buffer zone | Riparian corridor conservation easement Flood / Stormwater Control (creek bed alterations and bank repair) |
| Other | - | Relocation of Seneca within the project site Club Knoll – Non-profit, / community use and/or administrative uses |

SOURCE: 1998 EIS/EIR; SunCal Oak Knoll, LLC, 2007

Impact statements from the 1998 EIS/EIR are referenced using the same designation therein, preceded by the Initial Study document title for clarity (e.g., “1998 EIS/EIR Impact 1”).

Mitigation Measures

Nomenclature of Impacts and Mitigations

Project-specific mitigation measures are identified throughout this SEIR to reduce the effects of significant environmental impacts. All mitigation measures will be 1) included as part of the design, construction, and operations of the proposed project; 2) adopted as conditions of approval for the project; 3) will be subject to the monitoring and reporting requirements of CEQA and the terms of the discretionary approvals for the project, such as the PUD permit.

This SEIR designates mitigation measures in the same manner described above for Impacts. Where there are multiple measures to address the same impact, each is numbered sequentially. Generally, all mitigation measures are indented and in bold text, although in cases where the mitigation includes extensive text, not all text may be bolded (primarily mitigation measures related to traffic and air quality impacts).

Relationship to Standard Conditions of Approval

Despite the consistent reference to “mitigation measure” throughout this SEIR, the mitigation measures identified in this SEIR (and the Initial Study) in most cases are the City’s Uniformly Applied Development Standards, which the City routinely incorporates into projects as conditions of approval, regardless of a project’s environmental determination. As applicable, the Uniformly Applied Development Standards are typically adopted as requirements of an individual project when it is approved by the City and are designed to, and will, substantially mitigate environmental effects to less than significant levels.

Mitigations from the 1998 EIS/EIR

In certain cases, mitigation measures identified for the Maximum Capacity Alternative in the 1998 EIS/EIR would also effectively reduce significant impacts of the proposed project to less than significant. Such mitigation measures are modified as necessary to specifically apply to the project and reflect or incorporate current regulations, standards, and professional practices.

Mitigation measures from the 1998 EIS/EIR are referenced as described above for impacts. However, when incorporated into this SEIR to apply to the proposed project, the 1998 EIS/EIR measure is renamed using the SEIR mitigation measure nomenclature described above.

All mitigation measures are also designated as “New” (i.e., not previously identified in the 1998 EIS/EIR) or “Revised” (i.e., modified from the 1998 EIS/EIR mitigation to apply to the impact identified for the proposed project).

References and Resources

All persons and documents consulted during preparation of the analysis in this SEIR are listed at the end of each analysis section (i.e., Sections IV.A through IV.E) and in **Appendix G** to this document.