SECTION 5: EVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

Approach to Environmental Analysis

Section 5.1 through Section 5.16 of this Master EIR contain discussions of the environmental setting, regulatory setting, thresholds of significance, and potential environmental impacts related to construction and operation of the proposed project. These sections also include a discussion of mitigation measures and the level of significance after the implementation of mitigation measures.

Section 15125(a) of the CEQA Guidelines identifies that an EIR include a description of the physical environmental conditions as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published. Although the NOP was published in 2012, the population projection used as a baseline was from 2010. The 2010 population from the 2010 U.S. Census for the City of Fresno was 494,665 persons. The 2012 population estimate for the City of Fresno from the U.S. Census was 495,777 persons. The increase in population from 2010 to 2012 was approximately 1,000 persons which represented approximately 0.2 percent increase. The relatively small increase in population can likely be contributable to the economic recession and, consequently, very low economic development that occurred within the City of Fresno between 2010 and 2012. Since there was a small increase in population growth between 2010 and 2012, the use of the 2010 population estimate is considered appropriate since the establishment of a baseline for 2010 would result in an impact evaluation for the project that includes the potential effects that could have occurred between 2010 and 2012. Therefore, the use of the year 2010 population estimate as the baseline to address potential environmental effect is considered a worst-case impact evaluation.

The regulatory setting includes a discussion of the regulatory environment as it existed prior to the implementation of the General Plan and Development Code Update. There are federal, state, regional, county, and local regulations identified within each environmental issue discussion, where appropriate. It is acknowledge that although the existing City of Fresno and County of Fresno general plans and development codes currently guide development within the Planning Area, the proposed General Plan and Development Code Update would replace the existing goals, objectives, policies, standards, and regulations to provide new guidance for future development within the Planning Area.

The impact analysis contains a discussion of project-specific impacts as well as cumulative impacts. The project that is evaluated is comprised of two components: the General Plan Update and the Development Code Update. The General Plan Update includes a comprehensive update of the existing General Plan and includes ten elements, as described in Section 3.2.1 of this Master EIR and a consistency update of the Housing Element. As a component of the General Plan Update, the City includes amendments to various existing plans as described in Section 3.11.1 of this Master EIR. The update also includes a Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan which is located in Appendix F-2 of this Master EIR. As a component of the Development Code Update, the City includes the repeal of Chapter 12 of the City of Fresno Municipal Code, amendments and repeal of portions of the City of Fresno Municipal Code including Chapter 12, and the inclusion of Chapter 15 of the City of Fresno

Municipal Code including the Zone District Consistency Table. The above project components are evaluated in Section 5.1 through Section 5.16. Specific components of the project are not separately evaluated; however, the project, as a whole, is evaluated. The project, as a whole, is referred to as the General Plan and Development Code Update, General Plan Update, or the proposed project throughout this Master EIR.

The impacts within the impact analysis are identified as no impact, less than significant impact, potentially significant impact, or significant impact. The project-specific impacts address the potential environmental impacts that could occur with buildout development of the Planning Area in accordance with the General Plan and Development Code Update. This Update is considered the proposed project which includes buildout of the Planning Area. As discussed in Section 3, Project Description, buildout of the Planning Area is projected to occur by the year 2056. To reduce potential environmental impacts, the proposed General Plan Update objectives and policies, as well as applicable proposed Development Code standards and regulations are identified. The resulting level of impact that would occur after the implementation of the objectives, policies, standards, and regulations is identified. If the resulting level of impact is a potentially significant or significant impact, mitigation measures are identified, if feasible. After the implementation of mitigation measures, the level of impact is identified. The level of impact could be no impact, less than significant impact, or significant impact. If the impact is determined to be significant after the implementation of mitigation measures, the impact would be significant and unavoidable which requires a statement of overriding considerations in accordance with Section 15093 of the CEQA Guidelines.

Environmental Topics

The potential environmental effects associated with the implementation of the proposed project are analyzed in the following topical environmental issue areas:

Aesthetics
Agricultural Resources
Air Quality
Biological Resources
Cultural Resources
Geology and Soils
Greenhouse Gases
Hazards and Hazardous Materials
Hydrology and Water Quality
Land Use and Planning
Noise
Population and Housing
Public Services
Transportation and Traffic
Utilities and Service Systems
Energy Conservation

Organization of Issue Areas

Each environmental issue in Section 5 contains the following components:

- **Introduction** includes a brief discussion of the information used for the analysis.
- **Environmental Setting** identifies and describes the existing physical environmental conditions of the Planning Area associated with each of the impact sections.

- **Regulatory Setting** provides an understanding of the regulatory environment that exists prior to the implementation of the project. This discussion includes the existing objectives and policies from the City of Fresno 2025 General Plan as well as other regulations that currently exist.
- **Thresholds of Significance** identifies thresholds from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines that assist in determining the significance of an impact. Some thresholds include a more detailed discussion to address the City of Fresno's or other local agency's specific significance criteria for the Planning Area.
- **Impact Analysis, Mitigation Measures, and Level of Significance After Mitigation** describes environmental changes to the existing physical conditions that may occur if the proposed project is implemented, and evaluates these changes with respect to the thresholds of significance. This section includes a project-specific impact analysis and a cumulative impact analysis. Mitigation measures are identified for potential significant project and cumulative impacts, if determined feasible. The mitigation measures are those measures that could avoid, minimize, or reduce an environmental impact. This section also includes a discussion of the level of significance after mitigation that describes the level of impact significance remaining after mitigation measures are implemented.

Level of Significance

Determining the severity of project and cumulative impacts is fundamental to achieving the objectives of CEQA. CEQA Guidelines Section 15091 requires that decision makers mitigate, as completely as is feasible, the significant impacts identified in the Master EIR. If the Master EIR identifies any significant unmitigated impacts, CEQA Guidelines Section 15093 requires decision makers in approving a project to adopt a statement of overriding considerations that explains why the benefits of the project outweigh the adverse environmental consequences identified in the Master EIR.

The level of significance for each impact examined in this Master EIR is determined by considering the predicted magnitude of the impact against the applicable threshold. Thresholds are developed using criteria from the CEQA Guidelines and checklist; State, federal, and local regulatory schemes; local/regional plans and ordinances; accepted practice; consultation with recognized experts; and other professional opinions.

Format Used for Impact Analysis and Mitigation Measures

The format adopted in this Master EIR to present the evaluation of impacts is described and illustrated below.

Summary Heading of Impact

Impact AES-1:	**An impact summary heading appears immediately preceding the impact description (Summary Heading of Impact in this example). The impact abbreviation identifies the section of the report (AES for Aesthetics in this example) and the sequential order of the impact (1 in this example) within that section. To the right of the impact number is the impact statement, which identifies the potential impact.**

Project Impact Analysis

A narrative analysis follows the impact statement. The analysis includes a listing of objectives and policies of the General Plan Update and standards and regulations of the Development Code Update that would reduce the potential environmental impact of future development.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

A narrative analysis of cumulative impacts follows each impact statement. The cumulative impacts analysis includes a discussion of the level of impact that would occur if the proposed project in combination with cumulative development as described in Section 4, General Description of Environmental Setting, of this Master EIR, are implemented. If the combined level of impact is no impact, or less than significant impact, the project's incremental effect would be less than cumulatively considerable. If the combined level of impact is potentially significant or significant, the project's incremental effect is determined after the applicable objectives, policies, standards, and regulations of the proposed General Plan and Development Code Update are taken into account.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures to reduce potential project-specific and cumulative impacts are set off with a summary heading and described using the format presented below:

MM AES-1 Project-specific or cumulative mitigation is identified that would reduce the impact to the lowest degree feasible. The mitigation number links the particular mitigation to the impact with which it is associated (Impact AES-1 in this example).

Level of Significance After Mitigation

This section identifies the resulting level of significance of the project-specific or cumulative impact following mitigation.

Abbreviations used in the mitigation measure numbering are shown in Table 5-1, below.

Table 5-1: Environmental Issue Abbreviations

Code	Environmental Issue
AES	Aesthetics
AG	Agricultural Resources
AIR	Air Quality
BIO	Biological Resources
CUL	Cultural Resources
GEO	Geology and Soils
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
HAZ	Hazards and Hazardous Materials
HYD	Hydrology and Water Quality
LUP	Land Use and Planning
NOI	Noise
PH	Population and Housing
PS	Public Services
TRANS	Transportation and Traffic
USS	Utilities and Service Systems
EN	Energy