

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document, together with the Highland Estates Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report (recirculated draft EIR) which is incorporated by reference, constitutes the Highland Estates Final Environmental Impact Report (final EIR).

A draft EIR for this project was circulated in December 2008 (SCH #2007052068). To address concerns raised by interested parties and public agencies especially related to site geology, the County decided to revise and recirculate the December 2008 draft EIR. In addition, text was added in the recirculated draft EIR as appropriate in order to respond to the comments received on the December 2008 draft EIR. The draft EIR was recirculated in its entirety. Given this, pursuant to Section 15088.5(f)(1), the County of San Mateo as the lead agency requested that reviewers of the recirculated draft EIR document submit new comments based on the revised project description and impact analyses.

The final EIR is an informational document prepared by the County of San Mateo that must be considered by decision makers before approving or denying the Highland Estates project (proposed project). Pursuant to Section 15132 of the *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines*, this final EIR consists of (a) revisions to the recirculated draft EIR, (b) a list of persons and organizations that commented on the recirculated draft EIR, (c) comments received on the recirculated draft EIR, (d) the County's responses to significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process, and (e) any other information added by the County. The final EIR will be used for review and consideration for certification by the County.

This Introduction section provides a description of the organization of this document, a summary of the EIR certification and project approval procedure, a summary of public involvement, and an overview of the response to comment process.

The final EIR is available on the County's website at: <http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/portal/site/planning/menuitem.2ca7e1985b6c8f5565d293e5d17332a0/?vgnnextoid=c5744f7978575210VgnVCM1000001937230aR CRD&cpsextcurrchannel=1>. A copy of the final EIR can also be obtained at the following address:

County of San Mateo Planning Department

455 County Center, 2nd Floor

Redwood City, CA 94063

1.1 Organization of this Final EIR

This document is organized into five sections. Following this introduction (**Section 1.0**), **Section 2.0, Project Refinements & Recirculated Draft EIR Text Changes**, presents minor changes to the project description since the publication of the recirculated draft EIR and revisions that have been made to the recirculated draft EIR as a result of comments received from organizations and individuals on the document. **Section 3.0, Response to Comments**, contains a list of persons and organizations that submitted written comments on the recirculated draft EIR, the comments letters, and responses to those comments. **Section 4.0, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program**, contains the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for the proposed project, and **Section 5.0, List of EIR Preparers**, lists persons involved in the preparation of this final EIR.

1.2 EIR Certification - Project Approval Process

Prior to approving the proposed project, the County must certify that (1) the final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA; (2) the County has reviewed and considered the information in the final EIR; and (3) the final EIR reflects the County's independent judgment and analysis (*State CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15090).

Once the final EIR is certified, the County can approve the project as proposed, approve one of the alternatives evaluated in the EIR, or choose to take no action on the project. As part of the approval of either the project or an alternative, the County must make written findings for each significant effect identified in the EIR. These findings will state whether the identified significant effect can be avoided or substantially reduced through feasible mitigation measures or a feasible alternative, whether the effect can only be mitigated by the action of some agency other than the County, or whether the identified mitigation measures or alternatives are infeasible and cannot be implemented (*State CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15091). To ensure implementation of all adopted mitigation measures, the County must adopt a mitigation monitoring and reporting plan (*State CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15097). In addition, after all feasible mitigation measures are adopted, if some effects are still considered significant and unavoidable, the County must adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations that identifies the specific economic, social, technical, or other considerations that, in the County's judgment, outweigh the significant environmental effects of the proposed project (*State CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15091).

Once it is certified, the final EIR may also be used by responsible agencies in deciding whether, or under what conditions, to approve the required entitlements.

1.3 Public Involvement

The County released the recirculated draft EIR for public review and comment on September 14, 2009, for a 45-day public review period. The Notice of Completion for the recirculated draft EIR identified the 45-day public review period to end on October 28, 2009. However, the County of San Mateo extended the public review period 12 days, ending on November 9, 2009. Copies of the recirculated draft EIR were distributed to agencies, local governments, and interested parties. Hard copies of the recirculated draft EIR and appendices were available to the public at the County of San Mateo Planning Department counter (455 County Center, 2nd Floor, Redwood City, CA 94063). The recirculated draft EIR was also available online at: <http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/portal/site/planning/menuitem.2ca7e1985b6c8f5565d293e5d17332a0/?vgnextoid=be13db7f3bab3210VgnVCM1000001937230aRCRD&cpsextcurrchannel=1>.

1.4 Responses to Comments

Pursuant to CEQA, the lead agency must respond to all substantive environmental issues raised in comments on the recirculated draft EIR. Responses to all written and verbal comments received within the comment period are contained in this final EIR. Responses in this final EIR include factual corrections and explanation of recirculated draft EIR analyses. Any changes to the text of the recirculated draft EIR that resulted from the comments is presented in **Section 2.0** of this final EIR.