3.0 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This section examines potentially significant environmental effects associated with adoption and implementation of the 2004 Land Use and Mobility Elements, Zoning Code Revisions, and the Central Specific Plan, and identifies mitigation measures to reduce impacts found to be potentially significant in the EIR analysis. Each environmental issue for which the Initial Study (see Appendix A) identified a potentially significant impact is discussed in the following manner:

Environmental Setting describes the existing environmental conditions in the City to provide a foundation for comparing "before the project" and "after the project" environmental conditions.

Thresholds Used to Determine Level of Impact defines and lists specific criteria used to determine whether an impact is considered to be potentially significant. Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines; local, State, federal or other standards applicable to that impact area; and officially established thresholds of significance are the major sources used in crafting criteria appropriate to the specifics of a project, since "... an ironclad definition of significant effect is not always possible because the significance of an activity may vary with the setting" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15064 [b]). Principally, "... a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within an area affected by the project, including land, air, water, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic and aesthetic significance" constitutes a significant impact (CEQA Guidelines Section 15382).

Environmental Impact presents evidence, based to the extent possible on scientific and factual data, about the cause and effect relationship between the project and the potential changes in the environment. The exact magnitude, duration, extent, frequency, range, or other parameters of a potential impact are ascertained to the extent possible to provide facts in support of finding the impact to be or not to be significant. In determining whether impacts may be significant, all the potential effects, including direct effects, reasonably foreseeable indirect effects, and considerable contributions to cumulative effects, are considered. If, after thorough investigation, a particular impact is too speculative for evaluation, that conclusion is noted (CEQA Guidelines Section 15145). Such may be the case for a number of issue areas given that the project is a multiple year plan, and inherent uncertainties arise in predicting land use activities so far in the future. The project was prepared through a process which considered possible environmental impacts, allowing mitigation to be addressed by plan policies. When a specific feature of the project, whether it be a policy, standard, or guideline, avoids or reduces an environmental impact, that feature is identified.

Conclusion clearly summarizes the level of impact in comparison to the threshold used to determine level of impact.

Mitigation Measures identify means to reduce or avoid the potentially significant impact in cases where the EIR analysis determines impacts to be potentially significant. Standard existing regulations, requirements, and procedures that are applied to all similar projects are taken into account in identifying what additional project-specific mitigation may be needed to reduce significant impacts. Mitigation, in addition to measures that the lead agency will implement, can

also include measures that are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091[a][2]).

Level of Impact after Mitigation indicates what effects will remain after application of mitigation measures, and whether the remaining effects are considered significant. When these impacts, even with the inclusion of mitigation measures, cannot be mitigated to a level considered less than significant, they are identified as "unavoidable significant impacts." In order to approve a project with significant unavoidable impacts, the lead agency must adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations. In adopting such a statement, the lead agency finds that it has reviewed the EIR, has balanced the benefits of the project against its significant effects, and has concluded that the benefits of the project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, and thus, the adverse environmental effects may be considered "acceptable" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15093 [a]).