

Executive Summary

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluates the potential impacts of the proposed City of Pacifica General Plan.¹ The proposed Plan was developed in response to policy direction provided by the City Council and the Planning Commission as well as community concerns identified through an extensive public participation and outreach program, including newsletters, community workshops and public meetings in 2008-2010. The City of Pacifica is the “lead agency” for this EIR, as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). As the lead agency, the City is required to evaluate the potential effects of the Plan in an EIR.

An EIR is intended to inform decision-makers and the general public of the potential significant environmental impacts of a proposed project. The EIR also identifies mitigation measures to minimize significant impacts and evaluates reasonable alternatives to the proposed project that may reduce or avoid one or more significant environmental effects. These alternatives must include a “No Project” alternative that represents the result of not implementing the project and a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project.² Based on the alternatives analysis, an environmentally superior alternative is identified.

This EIR is a program EIR that examines the potential effects resulting from implementing designated land uses and policies in the proposed General Plan. The impact assessment evaluates the General Plan as a whole and identifies the broad, regional effects that may occur with its implementation. As a programmatic document, this EIR does not assess site-specific impacts. Any future development project made possible by the General Plan will be subject to individual, site-specific environmental review, as required by State law.

PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed Pacifica General Plan is intended to replace the existing General Plan, which was last updated in 1980. The General Plan is composed of goals, policies, a land use diagram, and other graphic figures and maps (e.g. open space systems, a transportation network, and public facilities) to guide future development within the City’s boundaries, through the year 2035.

Pacifica is located along the Pacific coast of the San Francisco Peninsula, in San Mateo County, part of the San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose metropolitan area. The City is approximately 13 miles south of downtown San Francisco, 40 miles northwest of San Jose, and six miles west of San Francisco International Airport. It is bordered by the cities of Daly City, South San Francisco, and San Bruno.

¹ Throughout this document, the term “proposed City of Pacifica General Plan” is used interchangeably with “proposed General Plan,” “proposed Plan” or the “proposed Project.”

² CEQA Guidelines 15126.6(a)

The proposed General Plan includes seven the seven elements required by state law, including, Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety. Additional elements may be included as well, at the discretion of the city. Option elements for the proposed General Plan include Economic Development and Community Design.

KEY FEATURES OF THE PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN

Based on the planning objectives that were set forth, nine key themes emerged as the General Plan took shape. These initiatives are large-scale themes that address the planning objectives. The maps and policies in the General Plan are structured around these key initiatives.

- *Open Space Preservation and Trail System Expansion.* Pacifica's hillsides, beaches, and other protected open space are prized by community members for their scenic, recreational, and habitat values. Continued preservation is seen as a key accomplishment over the next 20 years. The Plan identifies priorities for open space preservation and strategies to protect open space while allowing limited development, to be clustered and designed to fit into its natural setting. It also proposes an enhanced trail system connecting the coastline and ridges throughout Pacifica.
- *Sustainable Development and Practices.* Pacifica residents want to allow a responsible amount of development while ensuring that habitat and the community's unique, small-town character are protected. Residents also want to see green building and other sustainable practices promoted by the City. The Plan aims to set a good land use balance and to promote sustainable site planning and design, water conservation, waste reduction, and use of alternative transportation modes.
- *Creating a Destination for Tourism.* Throughout the update process, community members and stakeholders, and emphasized the need for more economic activity. There is a widely shared sense that Pacifica has the potential to attract more tourists, and that this should be a key component of the City's economic development strategy. The Plan includes strategies to enhance tourism by leveraging Pacifica's natural assets, creating more attractive places in visitor-oriented districts, marketing, and pursuing destination hotels and inns at key sites, including Rockaway Beach and Quarry.
- *Shopping Area Revitalization and Walkable, Mixed Use Areas.* Pacifica residents desire more attractive and successful commercial areas, and also envision the development of walkable, mixed-use areas with good transit access. The Plan seeks to support commercial revitalization and redevelopment at key locations, advancing the City's fiscal health, its quality of life, and its sustainability all at once.
- *A Unique, Vital Center for Pacifica.* Many community members expressed interest in creating a center for Pacifica, to provide a community gathering place and strengthen the City's identity. Palmetto Avenue was most often pointed to as having great potential to grow into such a vital, unique district. The Plan aims to facilitate the enhancement of Palmetto as a pedestrian-oriented retail area, anchored by new development at the Old Wastewater Treatment Plant site, linking the retail district to the Promenade and the Ocean. New civic facilities, such as a City Hall and a new Library/Learning Center, could be valuable assets to this area as well.

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- *Diversity of Housing and Population.* Only a small amount of new housing—about 1,000 units—is expected to be developed during the planning period. Residents are proud of the diversity of housing in the community, and want to ensure that this is carried on. In addition, many observed that new housing types should help provide additional options for residents as they age. The Plan aims to make Pacifica more accessible and ensure adequate housing options for people of all ages and incomes by providing enough sites at a higher density, and creating opportunities for mixed use development in transit-accessible locations.
- *Recreation Facilities and Activities for Youth.* Pacifica has limited recreation facilities, and community members expressed concern about the lack of things to do, especially for youth. The Plan identifies top priorities for recreation improvements, with an emphasis on improving park land that exists and providing some small new parks. Creating more accessible and vibrant commercial areas with a sense of place that appeals to visitors will also help make Pacifica a better place for young people.
- *Infrastructure Improvements.* The need for the City to maintain and improve streets, sidewalks, and other infrastructure and to address congestion along Highway 1 were clear consensus points for the community. The Plan includes policies to address congestion along the primary routes, and seeks to set priorities for sidewalk and street repairs based on location and safety.
- *Protection from Natural Hazards.* Pacifica faces a variety of natural hazards, including fires, earthquake-induced landslides, flooding, and coastal erosion. The Plan establishes a land use pattern that reflects hazardous conditions, such as steep slopes and coastal bluffs, and includes policies to improve public safety services and emergency management. The need to respond over the long term to coastal erosion will be an ongoing challenge for the City.

These themes and the policies proposed to implement them are described in greater detail in Section 2 of this EIR.

ESTIMATED BUILDOUT OF THE PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN

Full development under the General Plan is referred to as “buildout.” Although the General Plan envisions policies and land use intentions in the Plan to be realized by 2035, the year is not intended to be certain; nor does the designation of a site for a certain use necessarily mean the site will be built or redeveloped with that use in the next 20 years. The Land Use Element of the proposed General Plan provides a more detailed analysis of General Plan buildout.

Residential Development

Approximately 14,520 housing units currently exist in the Planning Area. The proposed General Plan is intended to accommodate an additional 1,000 housing units. General Plan buildout would result in approximately 15,520 housing units in the Planning Area.

Buildout Population

As shown in Table ES-1, the Planning Area would accommodate a population of approximately 37,320 people at buildout, an increase of about 6.5 percent over the current estimated population, or 2,530 new residents.

Table ES-1: Population, Housing Units, and Jobs at Buildout¹

	Existing (2010)	Additional	Buildout	Annual Growth (percent)
Population	37,320	2,530	39,760	6.5
Housing Units	14,520	1,000	15,520	6.8
Jobs	6,360	1,470	7,830	23.1

¹ Numbers rounded to the nearest tenth are only approximate projections.

Source: Association of Bay Area Governments, 2009; San Mateo County Assessor’s Office, 2008; Dyett & Bhatia, 2013.

Buildout Employment

Pacifica will accommodate approximately 7,830 jobs at buildout, an increase of about 23.1 percent. The total additional employment accommodated by the proposed General Plan is about 1,470 jobs. Over a 25-year period, this represents an average annual growth rate of 4 percent.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN

The following alternatives are described and evaluated in this EIR:

Alternative 1: Strong Center at Quarry Site

The development concepts proposed in this alternative focus on Pacifica gaining a new city center on the Quarry site, extending from the Rockaway Beach district and including a new civic center. This alternative assumes the greatest amount of development on the Quarry site, and the least amount of development on underutilized sites elsewhere. Palmetto Avenue develops as a main street, and mixed-use redevelopment occurs at Park Mall. Under this alternative, Residential areas are proposed to have the same or nearly the same designations as under the proposed Plan, with an emphasis on conserving sensitive areas, steep slopes and open space; respecting neighborhood character; and facilitating higher-density housing at appropriate locations.

Alternative 2: Conservation and Redevelopment

The development concepts proposed in this alternative include creating a balance between four smaller centers in a sequence along the Coast Highway: Pacific Manor, West and East Sharp Park, Rockaway Beach, and Linda Mar/Pedro Point. Each has a distinct identity. IN addition, most of the Quarry site is conserved, and Pedro Point and Linda Mar shopping

centers experience redevelopment. Only minimal development takes place on the Quarry site under this alternative. Residential areas are proposed to have the same or nearly the same designations as under the proposed Plan, with an emphasis on conserving sensitive areas, steep slopes and open space; respecting neighborhood character; and facilitating higher-density housing at appropriate locations.

No Project Alternative

The No Project scenario represents the continuation of the current City of Pacifica General Plan land use designations. It assumes that the existing Plan and Zoning Ordinance would continue to guide development in the Planning Area until buildout in 2035. While the proposed Plan and the two alternatives share an updated set of land use designations, the No Project alternative uses the existing General Plan designations. This means that there is only one commercial category, compared to five in the proposed Plan and alternatives; and one mixed use category, compared to three designations in the other scenarios. In addition, under the existing General Plan large sections of Pacifica are designated as “Special Area,” including the Rockaway Quarry site. On that site, the No Project scenario assumes development as projected in the Rockaway Beach Specific Plan, from 1986. That Plan anticipated the Quarry site to develop much more intensively than is projected under the proposed Plan or the other alternatives.

Table ES-2: Comparison of Buildout of Proposed General Plan and Alternatives

	<i>Housing Units</i>	<i>Jobs</i>	<i>Population</i>
Proposed General Plan	15,520	7,830	39,760
Alternative 1	15,540	8,080	39,810
Alternative 2	15,420	7,170	39,510
No Project	15,270	12,360	39,130

Source: Dyett & Bhatia, 2013.

ISSUES AND AREAS OF CONTROVERSY

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) was published and circulated on February 15, 2012 to solicit comments regarding the final scope and content of the EIR. Scoping comments received on the project’s NOP (included as Appendix A) included letters from various local agencies. These letters raise a variety of issues to be addressed in the EIR or in the Plan itself. These include:

Land Use and Housing

- Location of housing, jobs and neighborhood services near transit;
- Consistency with Association of Bay Area Governments’ Priority Development Areas and Priority Conservation Areas
- Viable land use designations for Park Pacifica Stables, Calson, Gypsy Hill, and Quarry properties

Transportation

- Increase in transit ridership;
- Reduction in vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled;
- Traffic Impact Study coordination with Caltrans;
- Transportation Demand Management policies;

Hydrology and Flooding

- Incorporation of most current Coastal Commission guidance;
- Research on best practices in responding to sea level rise and coastal erosion.

Biological Resources

- Relationship between preserved open space and biological resources;
- Strategies to address barriers to wildlife movement;
- Evaluation of biological resources in potentially sensitive areas, including the Quarry site;

Cultural Resources

- Documentation of current archaeological resources and consultation with Native American tribal representatives;
- Attention to historical resources, including the Sanchez Adobe

Parks, Public Services and Facilities

- Incorporation of trail connections between open spaces;
- Land use compatibility with adjacent regional park land;
- Access and wayfinding to National Park Service lands;
- Traffic impacts to regional park land;
- Resource allocation focus on existing City parks
- Priorities for new park and recreation facilities

Complete comments can be found in Appendix A. Each of the topic areas raised is addressed in this EIR.

Although there are no clear areas of controversy, impacts classified as significant and unavoidable have been identified in the issue areas of transportation and air quality, as described below. Other potentially significant effects will require mitigation.

IMPACTS SUMMARY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

Table ES-3 presents the summary of the proposed General Plan impacts identified in the EIR and the proposed General Plan policies and mitigation measures that reduce these impacts (in some cases policy commentary has been removed here for brevity). Detailed discussions of the impacts and proposed policies that would reduce impacts are in Chapter 3. The significance of each impact with implementation of the proposed General Plan policies is also

shown in **Table ES-3**. The level of significance is determined by comparing the impact to the significance criteria described in Chapter 3.

Impacts in the issue areas of transportation, air quality and emissions, and noise require mitigation to ensure that protective measures are in place to reduce or avoid potentially significant impacts.

Traffic Generation

Implementation of the proposed Plan would contribute to population and job growth resulting in more congestion in Pacifica. Specifically, it would cause a significant impact by causing several local intersections and roadways to operate below level of service (LOS) standards, measured at the average daily traffic level.

Capacity improvements along Highway 1 would improve LOS for roadways segments and intersections along that corridor, as described in section 3.2. In addition, the proposed General Plan includes numerous policies to reduce traffic impacts to the greatest extent feasible. Where improvements are feasible, they have been incorporated into the proposed Plan. Significant and unavoidable traffic impacts would remain, with no mitigation measures available to allow three segments of Highway 1 to meet the LOS standards.

Air Quality and Emissions

Implementation of the proposed General Plan will result in an unavoidable and significant impact associated with the increase of vehicle miles traveled faster than the increase in population growth. Current transportation modeling is unable to adequately account for land use and policy-based trip reduction efforts, and thus indicated more trip growth than is actually anticipated in this infill-and multimodal oriented Plan. Any plan designed to accommodate population growth in this way is bound to result in this unavoidable significant impact until such time as transportation models can account for trip reductions associated with mixed use, transit access, infill, and other proximity efforts.

The proposed General Plan is being offered despite these significant impacts because the City is in need of an updated land use plan that can thoughtfully and creatively accommodate projected population growth, as well as provide for jobs and economic development over the next 20 years. The current General Plan is no longer practical for Pacifica because stronger growth management is necessary and the current Plan neither provides for a balance of jobs and housing nor offers adequate, concrete policies to promote walkability, bikability, and minimize the impacts of growth. The proposed General Plan is consistent with MTC's and ABAG's transit oriented development goals in which urban development is directed toward existing urban infill sites near transit corridors in order to avoid the loss of open space. The proposed General Plan overall seeks to achieve this goal through growth management tools and policies that give high priority to density, connectivity, jobs-housing balance, and preserving open space and ecological areas. The significant impacts related to the proposed General Plan would not be considerably different under any other likely growth scenario for Pacifica that accommodates planned approved residential and non-residential development proposed for the city.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

Based on the comparative analysis in Chapter 4 of this Draft EIR, and setting aside the No Project alternative (as provided by CEQA), Alternative 2 appears to be the environmentally superior alternative for this EIR. Although the No Project Alternative would create less population growth and housing than Alternative 2, it assumes a much higher amount of commercial development than under the proposed Plan as well as the other alternatives. With this increase in commercial development, the No Project Alternative creates a significant increase in the number of jobs in Pacifica. In terms of environmental impacts, Alternative 2 would result in impacts similar to the proposed General Plan analyzed in this EIR, as population, housing, and job growth levels are relatively the same. In some impact areas, such as solid waste, this alternative would result in a lower environmental impact than the proposed General Plan. In addition, this alternative creates less total non-residential buildout acres than the proposed General Plan, which also leads to a smaller impact as a result of non-residential buildout. Alternative 2 would result in the creation of the four distinct activity centers. With these four centers, the objective to create a strong city center for Pacifica would not be met. Alternative 2 also would not allow for the transition of developable portions of the Quarry site to reuse and integration into the city fabric. Perhaps more importantly, Alternative 2 would not meet projected population growth in Pacifica over the planning period.