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INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Eastview Specific Plan & Annexation Project (proposed project) Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, Pub. Res. Code § 21000 et seq., as amended (CEQA) and the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, Cal. Code Regs. Title 14, § 15000 et seq. (CEQA Guidelines). The City of Galt is the lead agency for the environmental review of the proposed project evaluated herein and has the principal responsibility for approving the project. As required by Section 15121 of the CEQA Guidelines, this EIR will (a) inform public agency decision-makers, and the public generally, of the significant environmental effects of the project, (b) identify possible ways to minimize the significant adverse environmental effects, and (c) describe reasonable project alternatives. The City of Galt shall consider the information in the EIR along with other information that may be presented to the agency.

1.2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This section provides an overview of the project location and components. For additional project description details, please refer to Chapter 3, Project Description, of this EIR.

Project Location

The proposed project site is located within Sacramento County, California, east of the City of Galt, but within the City’s sphere of influence. The proposed project site is approximately 25 miles south of Sacramento and 26 miles north of Stockton. State Route (SR) 99 runs north to south through the City of Galt and provides the primary regional access to the City. The project site is bounded by Twin Cities Road (SR 104) to the north, the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) generally to the south, Cherokee Lane to the east, and Marengo Road to the west.

Project Components

The proposed project includes annexation of approximately 504 acres and development of approximately 338 acres of land for mixed residential neighborhood uses, including low density, medium density, and high density residential, parks, open space, schools, and minor commercial and public facilities. The 504-acre Eastview Specific Plan & Annexation area can be divided into three components: the Liberty Ranch properties, the non-participating properties, and the “Future Growth Area.” Liberty Ranch contains all 338.6 acres proposed for development and currently consists almost entirely of active agricultural fields. The non-participating properties include 148 acres of the proposed project site and currently include numerous rural residences, Liberty Ranch High School, and Estrellita Continuation High School. The non-participating properties are not proposed for development at this time. The “Future Growth Area” includes approximately 17.4

acres of the project site and includes the UPRR right-of-way and the two triangle parcels south of the UPRR tracks. The “Future Growth Area” is not proposed for any additional development at this time. Necessary entitlements for the proposed project include the following:

- General Plan Amendment;
- Specific Plan Approval;
- Pre-zoning;
- Annexation;
- Tentative Map(s);
- Creation of a Mello-Roos Community Facilities District (CFD) or other special financing district; and
- Development Agreement.

General Plan Amendment

Land within the proposed project area is currently designated in the City’s General Plan for mostly low and medium density residential uses, along with some high density residential in the interior, an open space corridor encompassing Deadman Gulch drainage course, a park site, and an elementary school site. In addition, a few parcels along Twin Cities Road are designated for commercial uses. The proposed project would redistribute the land use designations within 356-acres of the project site, including the Liberty Ranch area and the “Future Growth Area,” while retaining the currently adopted General Plan land use designations in the non-participating properties annexation area.

The General Plan Land Use and Circulation Elements would be amended to identify the project site as the Eastview Specific Plan area, consistent with the land use and circulation diagram in the Specific Plan. The amendment would mean that the land is governed by the regulations concerning land uses, open space, circulation, infrastructure, public facilities financing, and such, as set forth in the Specific Plan. It should be noted that the City’s General Plan designations provide an overlap between the Low Density Residential designation at zero to six dwelling units per acre (du/ac) and the Medium Density Residential designation at five to eight du/ac. Although the proposed project includes some development at five du/ac, it does not exceed the six du/ac maximum of the Low Density Residential designation. Therefore, the applicant has submitted an application including the Low Density Designation rather than a combination of Low and Medium Density Residential.

Specific Plan

The Specific Plan includes several components, such as a land use plan, a circulation plan, design guidelines and development standards, and details regarding the distribution, location, and extent of infrastructure and facilities, as well as a resource management plan. In addition, the Plan includes the following chapters: Introduction, Existing Conditions, Land Use and Zoning, Circulation, Public Services and Facilities, Parks and Open Space, Design Guidelines, and Implementation.

Pre-zoning

Pre-zoning of the project site, in accordance with land use districts and associated regulations in the proposed Specific Plan, is part of the annexation action. The proposed project site is currently under the jurisdiction of Sacramento County with zoning designations of Agricultural – Residential – 5 acres (AR 5), Agricultural – 20 acres (AG 20), and Agricultural – 80 acres (AG 80). The project includes pre-zoning of the entire project site to be consistent with the proposed General Plan and Specific Plan land use designations. The following zoning designations would be assigned for the project site: Maximum-Density Single Family (R1C), Medium-Density Residential (R2), Multiple Family (R3), Commercial (C), Open Space (OS), and Public/Quasi-Public (PQ).

Annexation

Annexation of the project site to the City of Galt, including Liberty Ranch High School and Estrellita Continuation High School property, is a formal municipal reorganization (annexation and related detachments from the Galt Irrigation District and Sloughhouse Resource Conservation District) action that requires approval by the Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo). The annexation would formally transfer all local governmental powers and municipal services pertaining to the project site from the County of Sacramento to the City of Galt. Upon annexation, the City would be responsible for providing water service, sewer service, police protection, library and general government services, along with maintaining water and sewer mains, the on-site storm drainage system, and local parks and recreation resources. A Property Tax Exchange Agreement must be executed between the County (including any affected special districts) and the City prior to consideration of the Reorganization request by LAFCo.

The proposed project site is currently located outside the Galt city limits but within the existing Sphere of Influence (SOI). The project would include the annexation of the entire 504-acre project site to the City of Galt. For this annexation to occur, first, the City would approve an annexation resolution for the project, which would subsequently be submitted to Sacramento County LAFCo for approval as a responsible agency.

Tentative Subdivision Map for Liberty Ranch Area

Two subdivision maps are being prepared to facilitate financing, sale, and development of the 338-acre Liberty Ranch area. One map would create large lots consisting of one or more development phases that could be secured to finance site development and infrastructure improvements or sold to merchant builders. The other would create individual residential lots for sale and home construction, define right-of-way for the streets, utilities and energy infrastructure, and identify common open space areas. Off-site infrastructure to serve the development includes a 15-inch sewer line and a 14-inch water line.

Creation of a Mello-Roos Community Facilities District (CFD) or other special financing district

The Mello-Roos (or other special financing district(s)) would be prepared for major infrastructure, public services, and facilities maintenance. Data regarding the structure and components of the district cash flow analysis, special tax formula, and other district formation topics would be compiled and analyzed. The City will consult with experts to (1) identify proposed land uses, public facilities to be financed, anticipated absorption rates, and timing and number of bond issues; (2) discuss assumptions to be used for the initial allocation of special taxes to land uses within the CFD and reviewing the advantages and disadvantages associated with various allocation methods; and (3) coordinate with the financial advisor regarding the anticipated bond structure, including special tax/debt service escalator, bond interest rate, short-term reinvestment rate, capitalized interest, reserve fund, and other features that may affect the size of bond issues and corresponding annual debt service.

Development Agreement

The Development Agreement (DA) is a legal instrument to assure various approvals granted to the project applicant by the City of Galt for the 338-acre planned Liberty Ranch development area, and to define responsibilities each party would have with respect to financing, construction and maintenance of public facilities and services within that area. The DA would not apply to the non-participating properties or the “Future Growth Area” of the annexation area.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE EIR

As provided in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15021, public agencies are charged with the duty to avoid or minimize environmental damage where feasible. The public agency has an obligation to balance a variety of public objectives, including economic, environmental, and social factors.

CEQA requires the preparation of an EIR prior to approving any project that may have a significant effect on the environment. For the purposes of CEQA, the term *project* refers to the whole of an action that has the potential for resulting in a direct physical change or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378[a]). With respect to the proposed project, the City has determined that the proposed development is a project that has the potential for resulting in significant environmental effects within the definition of CEQA.

The EIR is an informational document that appraises decision makers and the general public of the potential significant environmental effects of a proposed project. An EIR must describe a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives to the project and identify feasible measures to minimize any significant effects. The lead agency, which is the City of Galt for this project, is required to consider the information in the EIR in deciding whether to approve or deny the application. The basic requirements for an EIR include discussions of the environmental setting, environmental impacts, mitigation measures, alternatives, growth inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts.

1.4 EIR PROCESS

The EIR process begins with the decision by the lead agency to prepare an EIR, either during a preliminary review of a project or at the conclusion of an Initial Study. Once the decision is made to prepare an EIR, the lead agency sends a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to appropriate government agencies and, when required, to the State Clearinghouse (SCH) in the Office of Planning and Research (OPR), which will ensure that responsible and trustee State agencies reply within the required time. The SCH assigns an identification number to the project, which then becomes the identification number for all subsequent environmental documents on the project. Commenting agencies have 30 days to respond to the NOP and provide information regarding alternatives and mitigation measures they wish to have explored in the EIR and to provide notification regarding whether the agency will be a responsible agency or a trustee agency for the project. An NOP (see Appendix A) was prepared for the proposed project and was circulated to agencies and the public from June 25, 2014 to July 25, 2014. A public scoping meeting was held on July 10, 2014 for the purpose of informing the public and receiving comments on the scope of the environmental analysis to be prepared for the proposed project. See Section 1.6 below for a summary of comments received on the NOP.

As soon as the EIR is completed, a notice of completion is be filed with the SCH and a public notice of availability is be published to inform interested parties that an EIR is available for agency and public review. In addition, the notice provides information regarding the location of copies of the EIR available for public review and any public meetings or hearings that are scheduled. The EIR is circulated for a period of 45 days, during which time reviewers may make comments. The lead agency must respond to comments in writing, describing the disposition of any significant environmental issues raised and explaining in detail the reasons for not accepting any specific comments concerning major environmental issues. If significant new information, as defined in CEQA Guidelines section 15088.5, is added to an EIR after public notice of availability is given but before certification of the EIR, the revised EIR or affected chapters must be recirculated for an additional public review period with related comments and responses.

A Final EIR will be prepared, containing the EIR or a revision thereof as well as comments and responses to comments on the EIR. Before approving a project, the lead agency shall certify that the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, and that the Final EIR has been presented to the decision-making body of the lead agency, which has reviewed and considered the EIR. The lead agency shall also certify that the Final EIR reflects the lead agency's independent judgment and analysis.

The findings prepared by the lead agency must be based on substantial evidence in the administrative record and must include an explanation that bridges the gap between evidence in the record and the conclusions required by CEQA. If the decision-making body elects to proceed with a project that would have unavoidable significant impacts, then a Statement of Overriding Considerations explaining the decision to balance the benefits of the project against unavoidable environmental impacts must be prepared.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE EIR

This EIR constitutes both a project-level (Liberty Ranch properties) and a program-level analysis (non-participating properties), and pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15161, covers “all phases of the project including planning, construction, and operation.” State CEQA Guidelines § 15126.2(a) states, in pertinent part:

An EIR shall identify and focus on the significant environmental effects of the proposed project. In assessing the impact of a proposed project on the environment, the lead agency should normally limit its examination to changes in the existing physical conditions in the affected area as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published, or where no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced.

Pursuant to these guidelines, the scope of this EIR addresses specific issues and concerns. The City determined that the following issues will be addressed in the EIR:

- Aesthetics;
- Agricultural Resources;
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions;
- Biological Resources;
- Cultural Resources;
- Geology and Soils;
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
- Hydrology and Water Quality / Storm Water Quality;
- Land Use and Planning / Population and Housing;
- Noise;
- Public Services and Utilities / Recreation; and
- Transportation and Circulation.

The evaluation of effects is presented on impact topics in Chapters 4.1 through 4.12 of the EIR. Each technical chapter is divided into four sections: Introduction, Existing Environmental Setting, Regulatory Setting, and Impacts and Mitigation Measures.

Impacts that are determined to be significant in Chapter 4, and for which feasible mitigation measures are not available to reduce those impacts to a less-than-significant level, are identified as *significant and unavoidable*. Chapter 5 of the EIR presents a summary of all significant and unavoidable impacts identified in Chapter 4.

1.6 COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE NOP

The City of Galt received sixteen (16) comment letters during the NOP comment period for the proposed project. In addition, verbal comments were received at the NOP Scoping Meeting held on July 10, 2014. A copy of each letter is provided in Appendix B of this EIR as well as a

summary of the verbal comments received. The following letters were authored by representatives of State and local agencies and other interested parties:

Agency

- California Department of Toxic Substances Control – Jones, Dick;
- California Department of Transportation – Fredericks, Eric;
- California State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit – Morgan, Scott;
- Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board – Cleak, Trevor;
- Galt Joint Union Elementary School District – Schmidt, Debbie;
- Galt Joint Union High School District – Roberts, Matthew;
- Sacramento County Department of Transportation – Atwal, Kamal;
- Sacramento County Local Agency Formation Commission – Lockhart, Donald;
- Sacramento County Mosquito & Vector Control District – Combo, Kevin; and
- Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District – Huss, Karen.

Group

- Shore, McKinley & Conger, LLP – Harper, Scott; and
- WALKSacramento – Holm, Chris.

Residents

- Brown, Alfred and Pam;
- Hughes; Julie;
- Keagy, Brian and Kelly; and
- Klassen, James.

The following list, categorized by issue, summarizes the concerns:

<p><u>Introduction</u> (<i>c.f.</i> Chapter 1)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The level of environmental review for the “Eastview” project versus the “Liberty Ranch” project.
<p><u>Project Description</u> (<i>c.f.</i> Chapter 3)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The entitlements for the “Eastview” project versus the “Liberty Ranch” project.
<p><u>Aesthetics</u> (<i>c.f.</i> Chapter 4.1)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential impacts of the lights from the Liberty Ranch High School track and field. • A long-term Operations and Maintenance Plan.
<p><u>Agricultural Resources</u> (<i>c.f.</i> Chapter 4.2)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential impacts to “prime agricultural land.”

<p><u>Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions</u> (c.f. Chapter 4.3)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential impact of increased traffic on air quality. • Consistency with City of Galt General Plan Policy COS-7.1, any ensuing Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, and the California Air Resources Board’s Scoping Plan. • The amount of construction and operational emissions from the project. • The Development of an air quality mitigation plan and inclusion of construction mitigation measures. • Compliance with applicable SMAQMD rules and regulations.
<p><u>Biological Resources</u> (c.f. Chapter 4.4)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential impacts to wildlife. • Potential impacts to Eucalyptus Trees and other potential on-site habitat. • Compliance with Section B, Conservation Element, of the Sacramento General Plan. • Potential impacts to the South Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan and other resource planning documents.
<p><u>Hazards and Hazardous Materials</u> (c.f. Chapter 4.7)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential impacts related to arsenic removal from wells. • The presence of previous on-site pesticide use. • Ensuring adequate access to achieve the goals stated in the Sacramento-Yolo Mosquito Vector & Control District’s Integrated Pest Management Plan.
<p><u>Hydrology and Water Quality / Storm Water Quality</u> (c.f. Chapter 4.8)</p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential impacts to drainage facilities. • Potential impacts to neighboring wells. • Adequacy of water supply for both agricultural and urban uses. • Potential impacts related to storm water runoff. • Compliance with the requirements of the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan. • Potential storm water impacts related to high water events at Deadman’s Gulch. • Channel maintenance for the pre-existing drainages and the lower reaches of Deadman’s Gulch. • Obtaining the appropriate Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board permits.
<p><u>Land Use and Planning / Population and Housing</u></p>	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial land use designation at the corner of Twin Cities and Cherokee Lane. • Potential impacts related to the proposed zoning and the

(c.f. Chapter 4.9)	<p>Housing Element.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring adequate separation from the community of Herald. • Consistency with General Plan policies. • The land use designation of the parcels located on Marengo Road and near the anticipated extension of Walnut Avenue. • The amount of Open Space designation. • Potential impacts related to affordable housing and the reduced housing density. • The extent to which the project will promote environmental justice. • Cumulative potential land use impacts regarding the Wilton Rancheria Casino project. • Coordination regarding the Galt Fee Program/Specific Plan Fee program and SCTDF program. • Compatibility with surrounding land uses.
Noise (c.f. Chapter 4.10)	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential noise impacts from the proposed school
Public Services and Utilities/ Recreation (c.f. Chapter 4.11)	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The size and location of the proposed elementary school site. • Ensuring adequate sewer capacity. • Potential impacts related to fire protection. • Potential impacts to both the Galt Joint Union Elementary School District and the Galt Joint Union High School District. • Potential improvements or expansions of public utilities services required by the project.
Transportation and Circulation (c.f. Chapter 4.12)	<p>Concerns related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential impacts related roadway safety and maintenance. • Potential impacts to the State Highway System and local roadway intersections. • Potential relinquishment of SR 104 from SR 99 to the eastern limits of the City. • Consistency with the SACOG Blueprint and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy. • Consistency with Galt's General Plan and Bike Transportation Plan. • Safety on County roadways and rural roadways without shoulders.

All of these issues are addressed in this EIR, in the relevant chapters identified in the first column.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE EIR

The EIR for the proposed project is organized into the following chapters:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Provides an introduction and overview describing the intended use of the EIR and the review and certification process, as well as summaries of the chapters included in the EIR and summaries of the issues and concerns received from the public and public agencies during the NOP review period.

Chapter 2 – Executive Summary

Summarizes the elements of the project and the environmental impacts that would result from implementation of the proposed project, describes proposed mitigation measures, and indicates the level of significance of impacts after mitigation. Acknowledges alternatives that could reduce or avoid significant impacts.

Chapter 3 – Project Description

Provides a detailed description of the proposed project, including the project's location, background information, major objectives, and technical characteristics.

Chapter 4 – Existing Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation

Contains a project-level and cumulative analysis of environmental issue areas associated with the proposed project. Each environmental issue chapter contains an introduction and description of the project setting, identifies impacts, and recommends appropriate mitigation measures, if needed.

Chapter 5 – Statutorily Required Sections

Provides discussions required by CEQA regarding impacts that would result from the proposed project, including a summary of potential growth-inducing impacts, cumulative impacts, energy conservation, significant irreversible environmental changes, and significant unavoidable impacts.

Chapter 6 – Alternatives

Describes the alternatives to the proposed project, their respective environmental effects, and a determination of the environmentally superior alternative.

Chapter 7 – EIR Authors / Persons Consulted

Lists EIR and technical report authors who provided technical assistance in the preparation and review of the EIR.

Chapter 8 – References

Provides bibliographic information for all references and resources cited.

Appendices

Includes the NOP, comments received during the NOP comment period, and all technical reports prepared for the proposed project.