



County of Yuba Community Development

915 8th Street, Suite 123, Marysville, CA 95901

Planning Division

Phone: (530) 749-5470

Fax: (530) 749-5434

Web: <http://www.co.yuba.ca.us>

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

MEETING

DATE: February 23, 2005

SUBJECT: Yuba Highlands Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report

Recommendations:

Staff recommends the Planning Commission:

1. Hold a public hearing to receive comments on the adequacy of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) that has been prepared for the Yuba Highlands Specific Plan; and
2. Extend the comment period for the DEIR by an additional 45 days to May 2, 2005 at 5:00 p.m.

1. Background and Analysis

Section 1.1, Background and Purpose of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) states the Draft EIR has been prepared in conformance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to evaluate the environmental effects of the proposed Yuba Highlands Specific Plan project. The proposed Yuba Highlands Specific Plan addresses a 2,902-acre portion of the 21,800 acre River Highlands Community Plan area in eastern Yuba County. The eastern border of the Specific Plan area abuts the Spenceville Wildlife and Recreation Area, as does a portion of the western border. A portion of the Plan's southern border abuts Beale Air Force Base.

The proposed Yuba Highlands Specific Plan is a comprehensive plan for the central area of the River Highlands Community Plan, which includes a mix of uses: varying densities of residential uses, neighborhood commercial services, light industry and/or park development, open space for recreational uses (including a golf course), and essential public utility sites. The Plan proposes a total of 5,082 residential units, 1,014,948 square feet of commercial and business park uses, and a total of 658 acres of open space (see Section 3.0, Project Description, of the Draft EIR).

2. Environmental Impact Report Process

Any discretionary land use action is subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Because of its potential impacts, the proposed Yuba Highlands Specific Plan requires an EIR.

In summary, the EIR process is:

- “**Scoping**,” with an opportunity for the public to comment on the issues that should be addressed in the EIR. The Notice of Preparation (NOP) was released for public review in March 2001. The County took comments on the project scope, which included a public meeting.
- **Draft Environmental Impact Report** with an analysis of the proposed project’s impacts on the environment, possible measures that would mitigate impacts, and assessment of alternatives to the proposal that might reduce or eliminate impacts. The DEIR looks at impacts of the proposed project, and “cumulative” impacts reflecting likely future changes in the area or the region. The DEIR for the Yuba Highlands Specific Plan was released on January 31, 2005, with a comment period ending March 17, 2005.
- **Final Environmental Impact Report** with a response to comments received on the adequacy of the DEIR. The Final EIR will be prepared after the close of the comment period.
- **Findings for approval** if a project is approved.

As a reminder, CEQA does not prohibit an agency from taking an action that will have a negative impact on the environment. Before taking such an action, the County must determine that all feasible mitigation measures have been incorporated, and that there are specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of the project that override the significant and unavoidable environmental effects.

Draft Environmental Impact Report conclusions:

Table 2-1 in Section 2.0, Executive Summary, of the Draft Environmental Impact Report summarizes the impacts and required mitigation measures for the proposed project.

The Draft Environmental Impact Report analysis found that the following potential impact areas were *potentially significant* or *significant* and recommends mitigation measures to reduce to these impacts to a level of *less than significant*:

- *Land Use;*
- *Geology and Soils;*
- *Hydrology and Water Quality;*

- *Biological Resources;*
- *Noise;*
- *Air Quality;*
- *Risk of Upset/Human Health and Safety; and*
- *Transportation and Circulation.*

The Draft Environmental Impact Report found that the following impacts of the proposed Yuba Highlands Specific Plan could not be adequately mitigated and would remain *significant and unavoidable*:

- *Biological Resources* - Cumulative project development and offsite infrastructure would contribute to the ongoing loss of natural undisturbed open space in the region, increase human intrusion and activity levels in proximity to habitat areas, and would potentially remove potential habitat for federally and state listed and other special-status species (Impact 4.4.13).
- *Noise* - Implementation of the Specific Plan would lead to an increase in existing traffic noise levels on the existing roadway network that would contribute to an increase in noise relative to existing conditions (Impact 5.5.1).
 - The project would contribute to a cumulative increase in traffic noise levels (Impact 4.5.4).
- *Air Quality* - Construction activities such as clearing, excavation and grading operations, construction vehicle traffic, and wind blowing over exposed earth would generate exhaust emissions and fugitive particulate matter emissions that would temporarily affect regional and local air quality (Impact 4.7.1).
 - Trips to and from the project and area sources within the project would result in new air pollutant emissions of ozone precursors and PM10 within the air basin (Impact 4.7.3).
 - The project would contribute to cumulative regional increases in air pollutants (Impact 4.7.4).
- *Traffic* - Development of the Yuba Highlands project will result in LOS F conditions at the SR 65 / Main Street intersection in Wheatland (Impact 4.10.4).
 - Development of the Yuba Highlands project will contribute to LOS F conditions on SR 65 through Wheatland (Impact 4.10.9).

3. Purpose and Structure for this Public Hearing:

The purpose of this public hearing is for the Planning Commission to solicit comments from the public on the Draft Environmental Impact report prepared for the proposed Yuba Highlands Specific Plan. The format for the hearing will generally include:

1. A brief introduction by County staff.
2. The environmental consultant, Pacific Municipal Consultants, will provide an overview of the CEQA process and the conclusions of the Yuba Highlands Specific Plan Draft EIR.
3. The Planning Commission will request comments from the public on the Draft EIR. At this time it should be stated that comments on the Draft EIR can also be submitted in writing to the Community Development Department (addressed to Mr. Charles Thistlethwaite) until 5:00 p.m., March 17, 2005. The Commission should request that each commenter complete a request to speak card, provide that card to the Planning Commission Secretary, come up to the microphone one at a time when called by the Chairman, and should state their name and address. Each commenter will be allowed up to five minutes to speak before the Planning Commission.

4. Request to Extend the Public Comment Period for the Draft EIR:

Planning Staff has received, and the applicant has consented to, a request for a 45-day extension to the public comment period for the Yuba Highlands Specific Plan DEIR. If granted by your Commission, this would extend the deadline for receipt of public comments to 5:00 p.m. on May 2, 2005. Unless an extension is granted, the deadline for receipt of comments will remain 5:00 p.m. on March 17, 2005.

With the conclusion of tonight's public hearing, the time for submittal of oral comments has ended. Written comments may either be:

- ◆ Personally delivered to the offices of the Yuba County Community Development Department during normal business hours;
- ◆ Submitted in writing to:
Yuba Highlands Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report
c/o Charles Thistlethwaite
Yuba County Community Development Department
915 8th Street, Suite 123
Marysville, CA 95901; or
- ◆ Sent via e-mail to: planning@co.yuba.ca.us

Prepared by:

Charles S. Thistlethwaite, AICP
Principal Planner

*Planning Commission Staff Report
Yuba Highlands Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report
February 23, 2005
Page 4*