

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This draft environmental impact report (draft EIR) evaluates the potential impacts of the Ball Estates project (project), a proposed subdivision of an approximately 61-acre project site in Contra Costa County (County) in Alamo, an incorporated area of the County. The project applicant, Camille Avenue, LLC, and Camille Ironwood Properties, LLC, is requesting a vesting tentative map for 35 residential Lots located on approximately 20 acres in the lower northeastern portion of the project site. A staging (parking) area that would provide access to local trails is also proposed. The rest of the site, approximately 41 acres, would remain open space. The construction of roads, utilities, and ancillary services associated with the residential homes is considered as part of the project, as well as the removal of two existing residences, office building, and auxiliary structures.

The Contra Costa County Department of Conservation and Development is the Lead Agency for this environmental review. The County prepared this draft EIR to assess potential environmental impacts of the project and has prepared this draft EIR pursuant to the *2017 California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] Statute and Guidelines*. CEQA requires all state and local government agencies to consider the environmental consequences of a project over which they have discretionary authority.

### 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE DRAFT EIR

The purpose of an EIR is “to identify the significant effects on the environment of a project, to identify alternatives to the project, and to indicate the manner in which those significant effects can be mitigated or avoided” (Public Resources Code Section 21002.1[a]). An EIR does not recommend approval or denial of any particular project.

CEQA requires that all state and local government agencies consider the consequences to the natural and human environment before carrying out or approving any project. To that end, this draft EIR informs County decision makers, responsible agencies, and the public of the environmental consequences that could occur if the project were implemented. This draft EIR discloses the project’s significant environmental impact and identifies:

- effects found not to be significant;
- mitigation measures to reduce significant impacts;
- significant impacts that cannot be avoided;
- growth-inducing impacts;
- cumulative impacts of the project in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects; and
- alternatives to the proposed project.

Pursuant to CEQA, the County will prepare a final EIR that will include responses to comments received on the draft EIR during public circulation, as well as any revisions to the draft EIR. The draft and final EIR documents, together with the administrative, record constitute a complete environmental review. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15090, the County must certify the final EIR before taking any action on a project and requested entitlements.

## 1.2 LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

This draft EIR provides a project level analysis. As noted in CEQA Guidelines Section 15146, the degree of specificity in an EIR will correspond to the degree of specificity in the underlying activity described in the EIR. Preliminary vesting tentative maps and detailed technical studies were reviewed to evaluate the project's potential environmental consequences. The level of analysis contained in this EIR will be sufficient to proceed with project implementation without further environmental review.

As described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15162, further environmental review could be required if subsequent development plans contain substantial changes to the project, or if other new information becomes available that would result in a new significant impact, a substantial change in mitigation measures, or a change in the level of significance of impacts identified in this draft EIR.

## 1.3 SCOPE OF THIS DRAFT EIR

Prior to the preparation of a draft EIR, the lead agency prepares and circulates a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for public comment. The purpose of the NOP is to determine the scope of the EIR through consultation with responsible agencies and other interested parties.

The County issued a NOP for the project on August 27, 2013. The NOP solicited comments on the scope and content of the EIR and announced a public scoping meeting, which the County convened on September 16, 2013. During the 30-day

comment period (ending September 26, 2013), the County received five comment letters regarding the scope and content of the draft EIR. All comments received during the comment period and scoping session were considered in the preparation of this draft EIR. **Appendix A** contains a copy of the NOP and the comments received in response to the NOP.

The draft EIR addresses the following topics in **Chapter 4.0, Environmental Analysis**:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural and Forestry
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

## 1.4 REPORT ORGANIZATION

This draft EIR is organized into the following chapters:

**Chapter 1.0, Introduction**, describes the purpose of this draft EIR, the scope of topics addressed in this draft EIR, and provides an overview of the environmental review process.

**Chapter 2.0, Executive Summary**, summarizes environmental consequences that would potentially result from implementing the project, describes mitigation measures, and indicates the level of significance of impacts before and after mitigation. This section also introduces alternatives to the project.

**Chapter 3.0, Project Description**, provides detail regarding project location, proposed actions, objectives, and required approvals.

**Chapter 4.0, Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures**, describes the environmental and regulatory setting for each resource topic, provides a brief description of the environmental effects that were found not to be significant, analyses potential environmental impacts of the project (including cumulative impacts), identifies mitigation measures to reduce significant impacts, and lists reference materials.

**Chapter 5.0, Alternatives**, identifies alternatives to the project and the comparative environmental consequences and benefits of each alternative.

**Chapter 6.0, CEQA Required Discussion**, discusses significant irreversible environmental changes and growth-inducing impacts that could be caused by project implementation.

**Chapter 7.0, List of Preparers**, identifies the lead agency and consultants involved in the preparation of this draft EIR.

Appendices to this draft EIR include the NOP and comment letters and technical reports prepared as part of the project.

## 1.5 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS FOR THE DRAFT EIR

The draft EIR will be available for review by public and interested parties, agencies, and organizations for a review period of 45 days as required by California law. Although 45 days is the minimum time for public review circulation required by law, the County will circulate this draft EIR for 60 calendar days to allow for additional review time. In reviewing the EIR, reviewers should focus on the document's adequacy in identifying and analyzing significant effects on the environment and ways in which the significant effects of the project might be avoided or mitigated.

To ensure inclusion in the final EIR and full consideration by the lead agency, comments on the draft EIR must be received in writing during the 60-day public review period at the following address:

ATTN: Jennifer Cruz, Senior Planner  
Contra Costa County  
Department of Conservation & Development  
Community Development Division  
30 Muir Road  
Martinez, CA 94553

Following the close of the public comment period, responses to public input will be prepared and published as a separate document. The draft EIR text and appendices, together with the response to comments document, will constitute the final EIR. The final EIR will be available to the public before the County considers certifying the document. The County will consider the certification of the EIR and approval of the project at a public hearing.

## 1.6 INCORPORATING BY REFERENCE

The documents and other sources that have been used in the preparation of this draft EIR are identified in at the end of each chapter and/or section. The CEQA Guidelines allow three methods to incorporate data from other sources:

### **Use of an EIR appendix (CEQA Guidelines Section 15148)**

To achieve a balance between the technical analysis referenced in an EIR and an EIR's public information function, CEQA allow technical analyses to be appended to the main body of an EIR. Information in an EIR appendix may include summarized technical data, maps, plot plans, diagrams, and similar information in sufficient detail to permit the public and reviewing agencies to make full assessment of the project's significant environmental effects. The appendices are presented on a CD-ROM as Volume II to this draft EIR.

### **Incorporation by reference (CEQA Guidelines Section 15150)**

Information incorporated by reference has been summarized in the appropriate section(s) of this draft EIR, as permitted in Section 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines.

### **Citation to technical information (CEQA Guidelines Section 15148)**

Source documents that are not project-specific have been cited where appropriate in the draft EIR.

All documents referenced in the draft EIR are available at the Contra Costa County Department of Conservation and Development, Community Development Division, 30 Muir Road, Martinez, California.

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