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Growth-Inducing Impacts

Pursuant to Sections 15126(d) and 15126.2(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, this section is provided to examine ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Also required is an assessment of other projects that would foster other activities which could affect the environment, individually or cumulatively. To address this issue, potential growth inducing effects will be examined through analysis of the following questions:

- Would the project remove obstacles to growth, e.g. through the construction or extension of major infrastructure facilities that do not presently exist in the project area, or through changes in existing regulations pertaining to land development?
- Would this project result in the need to expand one or more public services to maintain desired levels of service?
- Would this project encourage or facilitate economic effects that could result in other activities that could significantly affect the environment?
- Would approval of this project involve some precedent setting action that could encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment?

Please note that growth inducing effects are not to be construed as necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.¹ This issue is presented to provide additional information on ways in which this project could contribute to significant changes in the environment, beyond the direct consequences of developing the land use concept examined in the preceding sections of this EIR.

Remove Obstacles to Growth?

As discussed in the Initial Study (see Appendix A) and in Section 4.11, substantial infrastructure improvements would be required to develop this project, as proposed. However, extensions of

¹ *California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, Section 15126.2(d).*

existing utility facilities from surrounding roadways will provide a sufficient tie-in to the existing utility systems to accommodate the demands of this project at full buildout.

The proposed project consists of a General Plan Amendment (48403-GA), and Zone Change (48405-ZC) to allow for development of a maximum of 12,350 dwelling units, 575,000 sq. ft. of Multi-Use development, 175,000 sq. ft. of Community Commercial uses, 6,566,000 sq. ft. of Medical and Science uses, and 13 acres of Institutional uses, community and neighborhood parks, and a minimum of four elementary/middle schools within the Northern Sphere Area in the City of Irvine. In addition, the proposed project includes the permanent preservation of approximately 4,615 acres of open space through dedication of the land to the City of Irvine or other public agency. Under the present zoning, only limited use of the subject property is allowed, such as; those that are associated with Exclusive Agriculture, Conservation Open Space Reserve, and limited Residential, etc. Approval of the proposed applications would thus remove an existing regulatory obstacle to growth and could lead directly to production of new housing units and industrial development within the Northern Sphere Area. The proposed project would, therefore, be growth inducing with respect to removal of obstacles to growth within the project site.

The project also proposes to consider an amendment to the City's Circulation Element to establish LOS "E" as the acceptable level of service for specific intersections within the existing Irvine Spectrum and Medical and Science zoned areas within the Project Area. The current Circulation Element identifies LOS "D" as the target level of service. However, a change to LOS "E" would not remove obstacles to growth since the allowable intensity is determined by the City's Zoning Code and the existing entitlements for each parcel. Therefore, a performance standard of LOS "E" would not increase the amount of potential development within the City, though it may reduce the level of transportation improvements necessary at certain intersections within the City.

Require Expansions of One or More Public Services?

As discussed in Section 4.12, the public service agencies consulted during the preparation of this EIR have indicated that this project would necessitate the phased expansion of their existing resources, over the 15- to 20-year buildout of the project, in order to maintain desired levels of service. However, existing infrastructure is located adjacent to the project site to the south and west and is available to serve the initial phases of the project within Planning Areas 5B, 8A, and 9. In addition, the project site is the last piece of land available for development within the project area. The areas to the east, and west are already developed (Portola Hills, Northwood, and Northwood Point), and the area to the south is already approved for development (Millennium Plan II and Planning Area 40/Spectrum 8). The area to the north within Planning Area 3 has already been offered for dedication as permanent open space. Therefore, the proposed expansion of public services to serve the project site will not encourage development of areas beyond the project boundary.

Encourage or Facilitate Economic Activities?

During project construction, a number of design, engineering, and construction-related jobs would be created. This would be a temporary situation, lasting until project construction is completed. This would be a direct, growth inducing effect of this project. As new homes are developed and occupied, residents of the Northern Sphere area of Irvine would seek shopping, entertainment, employment, home improvement, auto maintenance and other economic opportunities in the surrounding area, inclusive of nearby areas, the entire City of Irvine and probably most of central and southern Orange County. This would represent an increased demand for such economic goods and services and could, therefore, encourage the creation of new businesses, and/or the expansion of existing businesses which address these economic needs. However, the proposed project is balanced in that it also provides Multi-Use Commercial to serve the shopping needs of the future residents and Research and Industrial land uses which will generate additional employment opportunities. Therefore, the proposed project will have a direct growth inducing effect, although indirect growth-inducing effects will be minimized due to the balanced nature of the land use plan.

Involve a Precedent Setting Action?

As discussed in Section 4.9, the proposed project requires a General Plan Amendment to amend Table A-1 “Maximum Intensity Standards by Planning Area” in the Land Use Element of the General Plan and proposes to transfer 12,087 dwelling units from the NCCP/HCP Bank to a variety of Medium, and Medium-High Density Residential development within the Northern Sphere Area. However, the required actions will not promote growth since they only shift intensities from other portions of the Planning Areas or other areas of the City and do not increase the total number of residential units allowed under the General Plan. As further discussed in Section 4.9, this project would be consistent with the Implementation Agreement for the Natural Communities Conservation Plan for the Central/Coastal Subregion of Orange County, as discussed in Section 4.4. No changes to existing zoning standards, or to any of the City’s building safety standards (i.e. building, grading, plumbing, mechanical, electrical, fire codes) are proposed or required to implement this project. Standard conditions of approval and/or mitigation measures have been identified in the preceding Sections 4.1 to 4.15 to ensure that subsequent subdivision maps and site-specific development projects comply with all applicable City plans, policies, ordinances, etc. This will ensure that there are no conflicts with adopted land development regulations and that environmental impacts are minimized as this project is completed over the next several years.

Pressures to develop other land in the surrounding area would derive from regional economic conditions and market demands for housing, commercial and industrial land uses that are not directly or indirectly influenced by zoning actions on a particular property. Approval of the proposed project would not, therefore, involve a precedent setting action that could be applied to other properties and thereby encourage or facilitate growth that would not otherwise occur.

As discussed above, the project also proposes to consider an amendment to the City’s Circulation Element to establish LOS “E” as the acceptable level of service for specific intersections within the existing Irvine Spectrum and Medical and Science zoned areas within the Project Area. The current

Circulation Element identifies LOS “D” as the target level of service. This change could be considered a precedent setting action. However, the adoption of a new performance standard for existing Irvine Spectrum and Medical and Science zoned areas within the Project Area is consistent with the LOS “E” performance standard which has already been adopted for other areas of the City including the Irvine Business Complex, Irvine Center Drive, and certain intersections within Irvine Spectrum. Therefore, the proposed amendment could be considered a continuation of the precedent already set in other similarly zoned areas of the City.