

1.1 Purpose of This Environmental Impact Report

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) for the Commonwealth Corporate Center Project (Project) has been prepared by the Project's Lead Agency, the City of Menlo Park (City), in conformance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, as amended. The lead agency is the public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project.

This Draft EIR assesses potentially significant impacts that could result from the Project. As defined in the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15382, a "significant effect on the environment" is:

... a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment. A social or economic change related to a physical change may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant.

As stated in the State CEQA Guidelines, an EIR is an "informational document" intended to inform public agency decision makers and the public of the significant environmental effects of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project. The purpose of this Draft EIR is to provide the City, responsible and trustee agencies, other public agencies, and the public with detailed information about the environmental effects that could result from implementing the Project, to examine and institute methods of mitigating any adverse environmental impacts should the Project be approved, and to consider feasible alternatives to the Project. The City will use the EIR, along with other information in the public record, to determine whether to approve, modify, or deny the Project, and to specify any applicable environmental conditions or mitigation measures as part of the Project approvals.

1.2 Project Overview

The Sobrato Organization (Project Sponsor) is proposing to redevelop the properties at 151 Commonwealth Drive and 164 Jefferson Drive (collectively referred to as the Project site) in the City of Menlo Park. The 12.1-acre Commonwealth Site was formerly occupied by Diageo North America and has been unoccupied since July 2011. The 1.17-acre Jefferson Site is directly adjacent to the Commonwealth Site to the north. This site consists of an operational warehouse building used for office and light industrial uses and associated surface parking.

The Project would demolish the existing buildings at the Project site and construct two office, biotech, and/or research and development (R&D) buildings, a surface parking lot, onsite linkages, and landscaping. The Project Sponsor's conceptual site plan proposes two separate buildings located in the southwest corner of the Project site, towards the main entrance at Commonwealth Drive. Building 1 would be arranged in an east-west orientation, and Building 2 would be arranged in a north-south orientation, to the east of Building 1. Each building would have a footprint of approximately 34,535 square feet (sf). Together, the two buildings would have a total floor area of approximately 259,920 sf.

The proposed structures would be surrounded by surface parking, landscaping, pedestrian paths, and water features. A courtyard with café tables and chairs would be situated in between the two buildings and would provide a social space for the Project. Two covered trash and generator enclosures would be located within the parking lots to the northwest of Building 1 and to the southeast of Building 2. Bicycle lockers would also be provided within the parking lot to the north of the two buildings. One depressed truck loading dock per building would be located in the northwest and southwest corners of Buildings 1 and 2, respectively. The northern portion of the Project site (the Jefferson Site) would include an entrance and driveway from Jefferson Drive, a lawn area for active recreation, picnic tables, a stormwater treatment area, and landscaping.

The Project site is currently zoned M-2 and designated Limited Industry in the City's General Plan. Under the current land use designation, the Project site could be built out to approximately 260,313 sf, with a floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.45, as identified in the City's zoning ordinance. The Project would comply with these requirements; however, the two proposed buildings would exceed the 35-foot maximum height limit in the M-2 zoning district. In order to comply with the M-2 zoning, the increase in height from 35 feet (allowed) to 61.3 feet (proposed) would require rezoning the Project site to M-2(X). In addition, a Conditional Development Permit (CDP) would be required to modify existing M-2 development regulations in order to establish a new height limit. The Project site would require a tentative map or lot merger to reconfigure the Commonwealth Site and the Jefferson Site.

The Project would also require a tree removal permit for each heritage tree proposed for removal per Municipal Code Section 13.24.040 and a Below Market Rate Housing Agreement for the payment of in-lieu fees associated with the City's Below Market Rate Housing Program.

1.3 CEQA Process

Notice of Preparation

The Notice of Preparation (NOP) was released for the Project on August 6, 2012 for a 30-day public review period. A public scoping meeting was held on August 20, 2012 before the Planning Commission. The NOP noted that the Project may have a significant effect on the environment and that an EIR would be prepared for the Project. A copy of the NOP is provided in Appendix 1 of this Draft EIR.

The NOP was sent to individuals, local interest groups, adjacent property owners, and responsible and trustee state and local agencies having jurisdiction over or interest in environmental resources and/or conditions in the vicinity of the Project site. The purpose of the NOP was to allow various private and public entities to transmit their concerns and comments on the scope and content of the Draft EIR, focusing on specific information related to each individual's or group's interest or agency's statutory responsibility early in the environmental review process.

In response to the NOP, letters were received from the following agencies.

- Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit
- California Department of Transportation
- California Department of Fish and Game
- San Mateo County Department of Public Works
- Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority

- Town of Atherton
- Menlo Park Fire District

In addition, one letter was received from an individual, and members of the public made oral comments at the Planning Commission hearing. Copies of these NOP comment letters and the comments recorded at the Planning Commission hearing are included in Appendix 1 of this Draft EIR.

The NOP concluded that the following environmental resource areas would be addressed as separate sections in this Draft EIR.

- Land Use
- Aesthetics
- Transportation
- Air Quality
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Noise
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hydrology/Flood Hazards
- Hazardous Materials
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Recreation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Biological Resources

The Project would not result in significant environmental impacts on agricultural, forestry, or mineral resources because none of these resources exist at the Project site. A detailed analysis of these topics is therefore not included in the Draft EIR; however, these topics are briefly discussed in Section 3.0, *Environmental Impact Analysis*.

Draft EIR

Impact Analysis

This Draft EIR analyzes significant effects that could result from the Project. As explained in Section 15002(g) of the State CEQA Guidelines, a significant effect on the environment is defined as a substantial adverse change in the physical conditions that exist in the area affected by a project. Preproject environmental conditions (the environmental baseline) are considered in determining impact significance. The impact significance thresholds for each environmental resource areas presented in this Draft EIR are based on the State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, *Environmental Checklist Form*. In addition, this Draft EIR uses City-adopted significance criteria for traffic impacts. Where significant impacts are identified, the Draft EIR recommends feasible mitigation measures to reduce, eliminate, or avoid the significant impacts and identifies which significant impacts are unavoidable. Cumulative impacts—two or more individual effects that, when considered together, compound or increase other related environmental impacts—are discussed for each environmental resource area. This document also discusses alternatives to the Project in Chapter 4, *Alternatives*.

In accordance with Section 15143 of the State CEQA Guidelines, this Draft EIR provides an analysis of the significant effects on the environment that could result from construction and operation of the Project. Section 15131 of the State CEQA Guidelines specifies that “the intermediate economic or social changes need not be analyzed in any detail greater than necessary to trace the chain of cause and effect. The focus of the analysis shall be on the physical changes.” Therefore, this Draft EIR does not treat economic or social effects of the Project as significant effects on the environment. In addition, if it is determined that a

potential impact is too speculative for evaluation, this condition is noted, and further discussion of the impact is not necessary.

Public Review

This Draft EIR is considered a draft under CEQA because it must be reviewed and commented upon by public agencies, organizations, and individuals before being finalized. This document is being distributed for a minimum of a 45-day public review and comment period. Readers are invited to submit written comments on the document. Comments are most helpful when they suggest specific alternatives or measures that would better mitigate significant environmental effects. Written comments should be submitted to:

David Hogan, Contract Planner
City of Menlo Park
Community Development Department, Planning Division
701 Laurel Street
Menlo Park, CA 94025
Email: dwhogan@menlopark.org

A public hearing to take oral comments on the Draft EIR will be held before the Planning Commission on March 24, 2014. Hearing notices will be mailed to responsible agencies and interested individuals.

Final EIR and Project Approval

Following the close of the public review period, the City will prepare responses to all substantive comments that relate to potential physical changes to the environment. The Draft EIR, along with the responses to the substantive comments received during the review period, will comprise the Final EIR and will be considered by the City Council in making the decision to certify the Final EIR and to approve or deny the Project.

Certification of the Final EIR by the City Council as complete and adequate in conformance with CEQA does not grant any land use approvals or entitlements for the Project. The merits of the Project will be considered by the City Council in tandem with review of the Final EIR. The State CEQA Guidelines require that, for one or more significant and unavoidable impact that cannot be substantially mitigated, the lead agency must prepare a Statement of Overriding Considerations that balances the social, economic, technological, and legal benefits of approving a project against the significant and unavoidable environmental impacts that would result from project implementation. The City Council must approve the Lead Agency Statement of Overriding Considerations in order for the Project to be approved.

1.4 Report Organization

This Draft EIR is organized into the following sections.

- *Executive Summary*: Provides a summary of the Project and the impacts that would result from its implementation and describes mitigation measures recommended to reduce, eliminate, or avoid significant impacts. The Executive summary also discusses alternatives to the Project.
- *Chapter 1—Introduction*: Discusses the overall Draft EIR purpose, provides a summary of the Project and the CEQA process, and summarizes the organization of the Draft EIR.

- *Chapter 2—Project Description:* Provides a description of the Project site, site development, Project objectives, required approvals process, and Project characteristics.
- *Chapter 3—Environmental Impact Analysis:* Describes the existing conditions/setting, analyzes the environmental impact, and provides mitigation measures (if applicable) for each environmental resource area.
- *Chapter 4—Alternatives:* Evaluates one alternative to the Project in addition to the No Project Alternative.
- *Chapter 5—Other CEQA Considerations:* Provides additional, specifically required analyses of the Project's effects, significant irreversible changes, cumulative impacts, and effects not found to be significant.

