

3 EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION

Chapter 3 of this volume (Volume 1) of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the proposed 2018 Long Range Development Plan (2018 LRDP) by the University of California, Davis (UC Davis). This chapter is divided by environmental resource category; each resource category is organized to provide an integrated discussion of the existing environmental conditions (including regulatory setting and environmental setting), potential environmental effects (including direct and indirect impacts as needed), and measures to reduce significant effects, where feasible, of construction and operation within the plan area.

Cumulative and growth-inducing impacts are discussed in Chapters 4, “Cumulative Impacts,” and 5, “Other CEQA Sections,” respectively.

3.0.1 Introduction to the Analysis

As required by California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 15126.2)), this Draft EIR identifies and focuses on the significant direct and indirect environmental effects of the project. Short-term effects are generally those associated with construction, and long-term effects are generally those associated with operation of the project. This chapter addresses the environmental setting, environmental impacts and mitigation measures associated with the project in relation to the following resource topics:

- ▲ Section 3.1, Aesthetics;
- ▲ Section 3.2, Agriculture and Forestry Resources;
- ▲ Section 3.3, Air Quality;
- ▲ Section 3.4, Archaeological, Historical, and Tribal Cultural Resources;
- ▲ Section 3.5, Biological Resources;
- ▲ Section 3.6, Energy;
- ▲ Section 3.7, Geology, Soils, and Seismicity;
- ▲ Section 3.8, Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change;
- ▲ Section 3.9, Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
- ▲ Section 3.10, Hydrology and Water Quality;
- ▲ Section 3.11, Land Use and Planning;
- ▲ Section 3.12, Noise;
- ▲ Section 3.13, Population and Housing;
- ▲ Section 3.14, Public Services;
- ▲ Section 3.15, Recreation;
- ▲ Section 3.16, Transportation, Circulation, and Parking; and
- ▲ Section 3.17, Utilities and Service Systems.

Sections 3.1 through 3.17 follow the same general format:

Regulatory Setting presents the laws, regulations, plans, and policies that are relevant to each issue area. Regulations originating from the federal, state, UC, and local levels are each discussed where applicable. Please see the discussion in Section 3.0.2 regarding UC autonomy with respect to land use policies and municipal regulations.

Environmental Setting presents the existing environmental conditions on the project site and surrounding area as appropriate, in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines (CCR Section 15125). The 2018 LRDP EIR will use the 2016-2017 academic year as the baseline year to reflect existing environmental conditions, unless otherwise specified and explained in relation to a specific topic addressed in the EIR. The extent of the environmental setting area evaluated (the project study area) differs among resources, depending on the locations where impacts would be expected. For example, air quality impacts are assessed for the air basin (macroscale) as well as the site vicinity (microscale), whereas aesthetic impacts are assessed for the project site vicinity only.

Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures identifies the thresholds of significance used to determine the level of significance of the environmental impacts for each resource topic, in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines (CCR Sections 15126, 15126.2, and 15143). The thresholds of significance used in this Draft EIR are based on the checklist presented in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines; best available data; and applicable regulatory standards of relevant public agencies. The thresholds may also reflect local policies adopted for the purpose of avoiding or reducing an environmental impact, particularly for impacts that may affect off campus resources, even if UC Davis is not bound by such policies (see Section 3.0.2, below). The level of each impact is determined by comparing the effects of the project to the environmental setting and the listed thresholds. Key methods and assumptions used to frame and conduct the impact analysis as well as issues or potential impacts not discussed further (such issues for which the project would have no impact) are also described.

Project impacts are organized numerically in each subsection (e.g., Impact 3.2-1, Impact 3.2-2, Impact 3.2-3, etc.). A bold-font impact statement, a summary of each impact, and its level of significance precedes the discussion of each impact. The discussion that follows the impact summary includes the substantial evidence supporting the impact significance conclusion.

The Draft EIR must describe any feasible measures that could avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, or compensate for significant adverse impacts, and the measures are to be fully enforceable through incorporation into the project (Public Resources Code Section 21081.6[b]). Mitigation measures are not required for effects that are found to be less than significant. Where feasible mitigation for a significant impact is available, it is described following the impact along with its effectiveness at addressing the impact. Each identified mitigation measure is labeled numerically to correspond with the number of the impact that would be mitigated by the measure. Where sufficient feasible mitigation is not available to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level, or where The Regents lacks the ability to ensure that the mitigation is implemented when needed, the impacts are identified as remaining “significant and unavoidable.”

3.0.2 University of California Autonomy

UC Davis is part of the University of California, a constitutionally created entity of the State of California, with “full powers of organization and government” (Cal. Const. Art. IX, Section 9). As a constitutionally created State entity, the University is not subject to municipal regulations of

surrounding local governments, such as the City of Davis General Plan or land use ordinances, for uses on property owned or controlled by the University that are in furtherance of the University's education purposes. Although there is no formal mechanism for joint planning or the exchange of ideas, UC Davis may consider, for coordination purposes, aspects of local plans and policies for the communities surrounding the campus when it is appropriate and feasible, but it is not bound by those plans and policies in its planning efforts.

The campus seeks to maintain an ongoing exchange of ideas and information and to pursue mutually acceptable solutions for issues that confront both the campus and its surrounding community. To foster this process, UC Davis participates in, and communicates with, City, County and community organizations and sponsors various meetings and briefings to keep local organizations, associations, and elected representatives apprised of ongoing planning effort and consider community input.

3.0.3 Terminology Used In the EIR

This Draft EIR uses the following terminology to describe environmental effects of the project:

Less-than-Significant Impact: A project impact is considered less than significant when it does not exceed the threshold of significance and; therefore, would not cause a substantial change in the environment (no mitigation required).

Potentially Significant Impact: A potentially significant impact is an environmental effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the environment; however, additional information is needed regarding the extent of the impact to make the determination of significance. For CEQA purposes, a potentially significant impact is treated as if it were a significant impact.

Significant Impact: A project impact is considered significant if it results in a substantial adverse change in the physical conditions of the environment. Significant impacts are identified by the evaluation of project effects in the context of specified significance criteria. Mitigation measures and/or project alternatives are identified to reduce these effects to the environment where feasible.

Significant and Unavoidable Impact: A project impact is considered significant and unavoidable if it would result in a substantial adverse change in the environment that cannot be feasibly avoided or mitigated to a less-than-significant level if the project is implemented. If a lead agency proposes to approve a project with significant unavoidable impacts, it must adopt a statement of overriding considerations to explain its actions (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15093(b)).

Cumulative Impacts: According to CEQA, "cumulative impacts refer to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts" (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15355). CEQA requires that cumulative impacts be discussed when the "project's incremental effect is cumulatively considerable... [or] ... provide a basis for concluding that the incremental effect is not cumulatively considerable (CEQA Guidelines, CCR Section 15130 (a))."

Mitigation Measures: The CEQA Guidelines (CCR Section 15370) define mitigation as:

- a) avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action;
- b) minimizing impacts by limiting the degree of magnitude of the action and its implementation;

- c) rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment;
- d) reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and
- e) compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.