

CHAPTER 4

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This section of the Focused Tiered Final EIR presents potential environmental impacts of the Creative Arts & Holloway Mixed-Use Project (Project). The scope of the analysis and key attributes of the analytical approach are presented below to assist readers in understanding the manner in which the impact analysis was conducted.

Preparation of this Focused Tiered Final EIR was preceded by the Tiered Initial Study for the Project (included in Appendix A), which, along with public scoping comments received (included in Appendix B), determined that a Focused Tiered EIR would be prepared to consider potential Project impacts to aesthetics, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, historical resources, and transportation. All other environmental topics were adequately addressed in the 2007 Campus Master Plan (CMP) EIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15152(f)(3), as described in the Revised Tiered Initial Study included in Appendix A and summarized in Chapter I, Summary, of this EIR.

This chapter examines potential impacts related to aesthetics, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, historical resources, and transportation, presenting the environmental setting, standards of significance, methodology of the analysis, impacts of the Project on the environment, and proposed measures to mitigate significant impacts. This analysis was conducted to determine if there are any new significant impacts not previously identified in the 2007 CMP EIR, substantially more severe impacts over those previously identified, and/or additional Project-specific mitigation that would eliminate or reduce the Project's contribution to previously identified significant impacts. Additional information about the analysis is provided below.

4.0.1 Tiering

This EIR is tiered to the 2007 CMP EIR, which is a Program EIR under CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. Given that, the focus of the environmental analysis in this Focused Tiered EIR is to determine whether substantial changes in the Project, the circumstances under which the Project would be undertaken, or the presence of new information of substantial importance could result in the identification of new significant effects not discussed in the CMP EIR, or result in substantially more severe impacts over those previously evaluated, based on CEQA Guidelines Sections 15168(c) and 15162(a).

4.0.2 Definition of Baseline

The CMP EIR baseline was 2006. Conditions existing in that year are considered the baseline against which changes that would result from the 2007 CMP were evaluated. When considering whether there is “new information of substantial importance” under CEQA, the current environmental setting is considered in this EIR. The current environmental setting is the physical environmental conditions at the time the Notice of Preparation for this Focused Tiered EIR was released in July 2016. Much of the setting information in this document is incorporated by reference and summarized from the 2007 CMP EIR, from which this EIR is tiered. However, updated 2016 information is provided, as needed, to determine whether new significant impacts or substantially more severe impacts could occur over those identified in the 2007 CMP EIR.

4.0.3 Definition of the Study Area

For each topic area of analysis, the study area evaluated consists of both the local Project area around the Project site and the area that could be potentially affected by impacts in each resource topic. The study area for each environmental resource area is defined in the pertinent resource sections in this chapter.

4.0.4 Basis of Impact Analysis

The analysis of impacts in this Final EIR is based on the location and magnitude of the physical effects that are projected to occur as a result of implementation of the Project. Impacts are evaluated in terms of changes to existing conditions that would be caused by the Project and that would be distinct from those identified for the 2007 CMP EIR. Changes in conditions with the Project are compared to CMP EIR standards of significance to determine whether new significant impacts or substantially more severe impacts would occur compared to those identified for the 2007 CMP EIR.

Standards of significance are identified for each environmental topic based on those standards provided in the CMP EIR. These standards are the thresholds used to determine whether implementing the Project would result in a significant environmental impact. Impacts are presented for each environmental topic, and a significance determination is provided at the end of each impact discussion. A significant impact is defined under CEQA as a substantial adverse change to the physical environment. Additionally, the impact discussion identifies whether new or substantially more severe impacts would occur compared to those identified in the 2007 CMP EIR. Additional information about the methodology used to assess impacts is provided in each environmental resource area.

4.0.5 Year of Impact Analysis

CMP EIR impacts were evaluated in terms of changes due to the CMP as compared to existing conditions, and updated, where relevant, from the 2007 CMP EIR (see Definition of Baseline, above). For each resource area, the conditions that would result at the end of the planning horizon of the 2007 CMP (2019–2020) are compared to baseline conditions to characterize the anticipated change in conditions. For simplicity, this EIR uses “2020” throughout to refer to the 2019–2020 academic year.

A planning horizon beyond 2020 is not considered in this EIR, as the EIR is tiered to the CMP EIR, which has a horizon of 2020. Additionally, a planning horizon beyond 2020 is not considered given that San Francisco State University does not have an adopted CMP that covers growth and development beyond 2020, and, therefore, projecting growth on the campus beyond 2020 would be speculative.

4.0.6 Cumulative Impacts

CEQA requires that, in addition to project impacts, an EIR must discuss cumulative impacts. According to Section 15355 of the CEQA Guidelines, cumulative impacts refer to two or more individual effects that, when considered together, are considerable or that compound or increase other environmental impacts. The individual effects may be changes resulting from a single project or a number of separate projects. The cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment that results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable probable future projects. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time.

CEQA Section 15130(a) also indicates that an EIR should not discuss cumulative impacts to which the project would not contribute. If the combined cumulative impact (impacts from other projects combined with the impact from a proposed project) is not significant, then the EIR should briefly indicate why the impact is not significant, and no further evaluation is necessary. If the combined cumulative impact is significant, the EIR also must indicate whether the project’s contribution to that significant cumulative impact will be “cumulatively considerable.” According to Section 15065, “cumulatively considerable” means the incremental effects of an individual project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects as defined in CEQA Section 15130.

Pursuant to Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines, the discussion of cumulative impacts must reflect the severity of the impacts and their likelihood of occurrence, but the discussion need not provide as much detail as is provided for the effects attributable to the project alone. The

discussion should be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness, and should focus on the cumulative impacts to which the identified other projects contribute rather than the attributes of other projects that do not contribute to the cumulative impact.

Section 15130(b) of the CEQA Guidelines provides additional guidance with respect to how an adequate cumulative impact analysis might be completed. Such an analysis can be based on (1) a list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency, or (2) a summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document, or in a prior environmental document that has been adopted or certified that describe or evaluate regional or area-wide conditions contributing to the cumulative impact.

The 2007 CMP EIR cumulative analysis used both of the above methods for the cumulative topics evaluated. For example, the CMP EIR used growth forecasts of population and housing for 2020 in the population and housing analysis, and used a list of reasonably foreseeable future projects in the vicinity of the campus for the aesthetics analysis. The transportation analysis used a combination of the two approaches by basing the analysis on both an annual growth rate in traffic volumes and a list of reasonably foreseeable future projects in the vicinity of the campus.

The 2007 CMP EIR evaluated the cumulative environmental impacts of campus programs and initiatives, development of new facilities, and population growth that would occur through the 2020 academic year under the 2007 CMP, together with the impacts from other reasonably foreseeable growth and development. As the Project is consistent with the CMP building program, it was considered in the project and cumulative analyses previously included in the CMP EIR. This Focused Tiered EIR reviews the prior cumulative analysis provided in the CMP EIR for aesthetics, air quality, historical resources, and transportation to determine whether new significant cumulative impacts or substantially more severe cumulative impacts could occur with the Project. As the CMP EIR did not evaluate greenhouse gas emissions, a cumulative assessment of this topic is provided in this Focused Tiered EIR.

4.0.7 References

SF State (San Francisco State University). 2007. Campus Master Plan Environmental Impact Report, San Francisco State University (SCH No. 2006102050). August 2007. Prepared by URS Corporation. <http://cpdc.sfsu.edu/plan>.