

4 Environmental Impact Analysis

This section discusses the possible environmental effects of the Rio Ranch Marketplace Project for the specific issue areas that were identified through the scoping process as having the potential to experience significant effects. “Significant effect” is defined by the *CEQA Guidelines* §15382 as:

“...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, but may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant.”

The assessment of each issue area begins with a discussion of the environmental setting related to the issue, which is followed by the impact analysis. In the impact analysis, the first subsection identifies the methodologies used and the “significance thresholds,” which are those criteria adopted by the County and other agencies, universally recognized, or developed specifically for this analysis to determine whether potential effects are significant. The next subsection describes each impact of the proposed project, Mitigation Measures for significant impacts, and the level of significance after mitigation. Each effect under consideration for an issue area is separately listed in bold text with the discussion of the effect and its significance. Each bolded impact statement also contains a statement of the significance determination for the environmental impact as follows:

- **Significant and Unavoidable.** An impact that cannot be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible Mitigation Measures. Such an impact requires a Statement of Overriding Considerations to be issued if the project is approved per §15093 of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated.** An impact that can be reduced to below the threshold level given reasonably available and feasible Mitigation Measures. Such an impact requires findings under §15091 of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Less than Significant.** An impact that may be adverse, but does not exceed the threshold levels and does not require Mitigation Measures. However, Mitigation Measures that could further lessen the environmental effect may be suggested if readily available and easily achievable.
- **No Impact.** The proposed project would have no effect on environmental conditions or would reduce existing environmental problems or hazards.

Following each environmental impact discussion is a list of Mitigation Measures (if required) and the residual effects or level of significance remaining after implementation of the measure(s). In cases where the Mitigation Measure for an impact could have a significant environmental impact in another issue area, this impact is discussed and evaluated as a secondary impact. The impact analysis concludes with a discussion of cumulative effects, which evaluates the impacts associated with the proposed project in conjunction with other planned and pending developments in the area listed in Section 3.0, *Environmental Setting*.

The Executive Summary of this EIR summarizes all impacts and Mitigation Measures that apply to the proposed project.

This page intentionally left blank.