

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Final Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) addresses the potential environmental effects of two long-range planning documents that include related General Plan Amendments and a zoning overlay district, proposed for the Las Virgenes Road Corridor area of the City of Calabasas, California. These documents include: 1) the Las Virgenes Gateway Master Plan, which focuses on that portion of Las Virgenes Road south of US Highway 101; and 2) the Las Virgenes Road Corridor Design Plan, which addresses the Las Virgenes Road right of way from Mulholland Highway on the south to the Ventura County line on the north. The Las Virgenes Gateway Master Plan includes the road frontage along Las Virgenes Road as well as surrounding properties (approximately 191 acres) in the immediate vicinity of this important "gateway" area of the City.

While these two long-range planning programs are separate, and will require independent discretionary actions, they have similar objectives, are in close proximity, and have overlapping elements (i.e., both programs involve the Las Virgenes Road Corridor). For these reasons, the environmental analysis of the two programs has been consolidated into a single document that addresses the environmental effects of the two programs and the related General Plan Amendments and zoning overlay district, both individually and cumulatively.

### 1.1 LEGAL AUTHORITY AND FINDINGS

This IS/MND has been prepared in accordance with the *CEQA Guidelines* and relevant provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended.

**Initial Study.** Section 15063(c) of the *CEQA Guidelines* defines an Initial Study as the proper preliminary method of analyzing the potential environmental consequences of a project. The purposes of an Initial Study are:

- (1) To provide the Lead Agency (the City of Calabasas) with the necessary information to decide whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or a Mitigated Negative Declaration;
- (2) To enable the Lead Agency to modify a project, mitigating adverse impacts, thus avoiding the need to prepare an EIR; and
- (3) To provide sufficient technical analysis of the environmental effects of a project to permit a judgment, based on the record as a whole, that the environmental effects of a project have been adequately mitigated.

**Negative Declaration.** Section 15070 of the *CEQA Guidelines* states that a Negative Declaration shall be prepared for a project subject to CEQA when either:

- (1) The Initial Study shows that there is no substantial evidence that the project may have a significant effect on the environment; or
- (2) The Initial Study identifies potentially significant effects but:
  - a. Revisions in the project plans or proposals made by or agreed to by the applicant before the proposed Negative Declaration is released for public



review would avoid the effects or mitigate the effects to a point where clearly no significant effects would occur; and

- b. There is no substantial evidence before the agency that the project as revised may have a significant effect on the environment."

An IS/MND may be used to satisfy the requirements of CEQA when the physical effects of planning programs such as the Las Virgenes Gateway Master Plan and the Las Virgenes Road Corridor Design Plan are anticipated either to have no significant effects or to have potentially significant effects on the environment that can be fully mitigated by either modifying a project or by incorporating mitigation measures into an environmental compliance program. As discussed further in subsequent sections of this document, adoption and implementation of these proposed long-range plans will not result in any significant effects on the environment that cannot be mitigated to less than significant levels. In accordance with state law, a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) was developed for each of these two planning projects. The MMRPs are contained in Appendix 2.

## 1.2 IMPACT ANALYSIS AND SIGNIFICANCE CLASSIFICATION

The following sections of this IS/MND provide discussions of the possible environmental effects of the proposed planning programs for specific issue areas that have been identified on the CEQA Initial Study Checklist. For each issue area, potential effects are isolated for the two proposed planning programs. This will allow City decision-makers the flexibility to take action on the projects separately or together.

A "significant effect" is defined by the Section 15382 of the *CEQA Guidelines* as "a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by a project, including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance." According to the *CEQA Guidelines*, "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 begins with the identification of methodologies used and a discussion of the "significance thresholds" that are used to determine whether potential effects are significant.

Following the evaluation of each environmental effect is a discussion of mitigation measures and the residual effects or level of significance remaining after the implementation of the measures. In those cases where a mitigation measure for an impact could have a significant environmental impact in another issue area, this impact is discussed as a residual effect.

## 1.3 USE OF THIS DOCUMENT BY THE CITY OF CALABASAS

This is a final environmental document that will be used in the public review and decision-making process for the Las Virgenes Gateway Master Plan and Las Virgenes Road Corridor Design Plan projects. A Draft IS/MND was prepared on October 20, 1998 and circulated for a 30-day public review period. Comments received on the draft document, and responses to all comments received are contained in Appendix 3.



#### 1.4 USE OF PREVIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS IN THIS ANALYSIS

The proposed project is intended to augment, refine, and facilitate implementation of specific components of the City's General Plan for the Las Virgenes Road Corridor area. As such, the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the City of Calabasas General Plan has substantial relevant information relative to the project planning area. The Final EIR for the City's General Plan, (September 1995) is hereby incorporated by reference. That document is available for review at the City of Calabasas Planning and Building Services Department, located at 26135 Mureau Road, Calabasas, California.

The City's General Plan EIR was prepared as a Program EIR, as described in the *CEQA Guidelines*. Sections 15168 and 15152 of the *CEQA Guidelines* describe the use of Program EIRs and the concept of tiering. The *CEQA Guidelines* specify that second tier environmental documents (i.e., Negative Declarations, Focused Supplemental EIRs, etc.) prepared for subsequent projects need only address site-specific issues related to that project(s). Further, the *CEQA Guidelines* indicate that there is no need to repeat the broad analyses and information contained in the Program EIR. According to the *CEQA Guidelines*, use of a Program EIR can eliminate repetitive discussions of the same issues and focus the subsequent environmental impact analysis on the actual issues ripe for discussion at each level of environmental review.

Relative to the proposed planning programs, it is important to note that neither of the proposed programs calls for any construction activity at this time and that subsequent environmental review will be required prior to implementation of individual projects. The type of environmental review document that will be required for subsequent projects will depend upon final project design characteristics, project-specific mitigation measures, and environmental conditions that exist at the time the project is proposed for implementation.

