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## **NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF** **A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

**TO:** Responsible Agencies, Trustee  
Agencies, and Interested Parties

**FROM:** City of McFarland

April 8, 2021

**Subject:** Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report

**Project Title:** 2040 General Plan for the City of McFarland

**Lead Agency:** City of McFarland, CA

**Project Location:** City of McFarland, CA

### **Introduction**

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is a statute that requires state and local agencies to identify the potential environmental impacts of a project and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible. A public agency must comply with CEQA when it undertakes an activity defined by CEQA as a "project," such as a General Plan Update. The City of McFarland will be the lead agency and will prepare an environmental impact report for the McFarland General Plan.

Pursuant to CEQA, the 2040 McFarland General Plan's Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will identify potential environmental impacts and feasible measures to mitigate those impacts. The preparation of an EIR includes specific time periods for public notice and comment.

We are requesting the assistance of your agency in defining the scope and content of the environmental information which is relevant to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Responses shall identify, at a minimum: (1) the significant

environmental issues and reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures that the responsible or trustee agency, or the Office of Planning and Research, will need to have explored in the draft EIR; and (2) whether your agency will be a responsible agency or trustee agency for the project. A generalized list of concerns not related to the specific project shall not meet the requirements for a response. The project description, location, and potential environmental effects are listed in the following sections.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent as early as possible, but no later than **30 days after receipt of this notice**. If your agency fails by the end of the 30-day period to provide the lead agency with either a response to the notice or a well-justified request for additional time, the lead agency may presume that your agency does not have a response to make. Please send your response to:

City of McFarland  
Attn: Maria Lara, City Manager, [mlara@mcfarlandcity.org](mailto:mlara@mcfarlandcity.org)  
401 West Kern Ave  
McFarland, CA 93250.

Or by **email** to:

Brianahi De Leon, City Planner, [bdeleon@mcfarlandcity.org](mailto:bdeleon@mcfarlandcity.org)

Ron Brummett, Planning Consultant, [rbrummett@aol.com](mailto:rbrummett@aol.com)

Larry Ronk, Acting Community Development Director. [lrnk@mcfarlandcity.org](mailto:lrnk@mcfarlandcity.org)

You can find a copy of the **Draft 2040 General Plan** at:

[http://mcfarlandcity.org/DocumentCenter/View/2200/Vol2\\_McFarland-Draft-General-Plan\\_November-2020](http://mcfarlandcity.org/DocumentCenter/View/2200/Vol2_McFarland-Draft-General-Plan_November-2020)

You can find **other related planning documents** at:

<http://mcfarlandcity.org/237/Community-Development>

**Signature:**



Cornelius Nuworsoo, PhD. AICP

4/9/2021

*Submitted on Behalf of the City of McFarland*

## Environmental Setting

### Project Location

The City of McFarland is in Kern County between Bakersfield, about 25 miles to the south, and Delano, located 7 miles to the north. Highway 99, which connects the City to the wider Central Valley region, bisects the City into east and west sides. Agricultural fields surround McFarland, framing the built environment and defining its rural character. Within and around the City are agricultural land uses, which feature the production of grapes, almonds, and dairy. Beyond its eastern sphere of influence, the Sierra Nevada mountains provide a backdrop to the City. Figure 1 shows the location of McFarland. The City's sphere of influence is approximately 18.4 square miles of which the area outside City limits includes parcels of agricultural lands. Figure 2 shows McFarland's city limits and sphere of influence.

**Figure 1: Location of the City of McFarland**

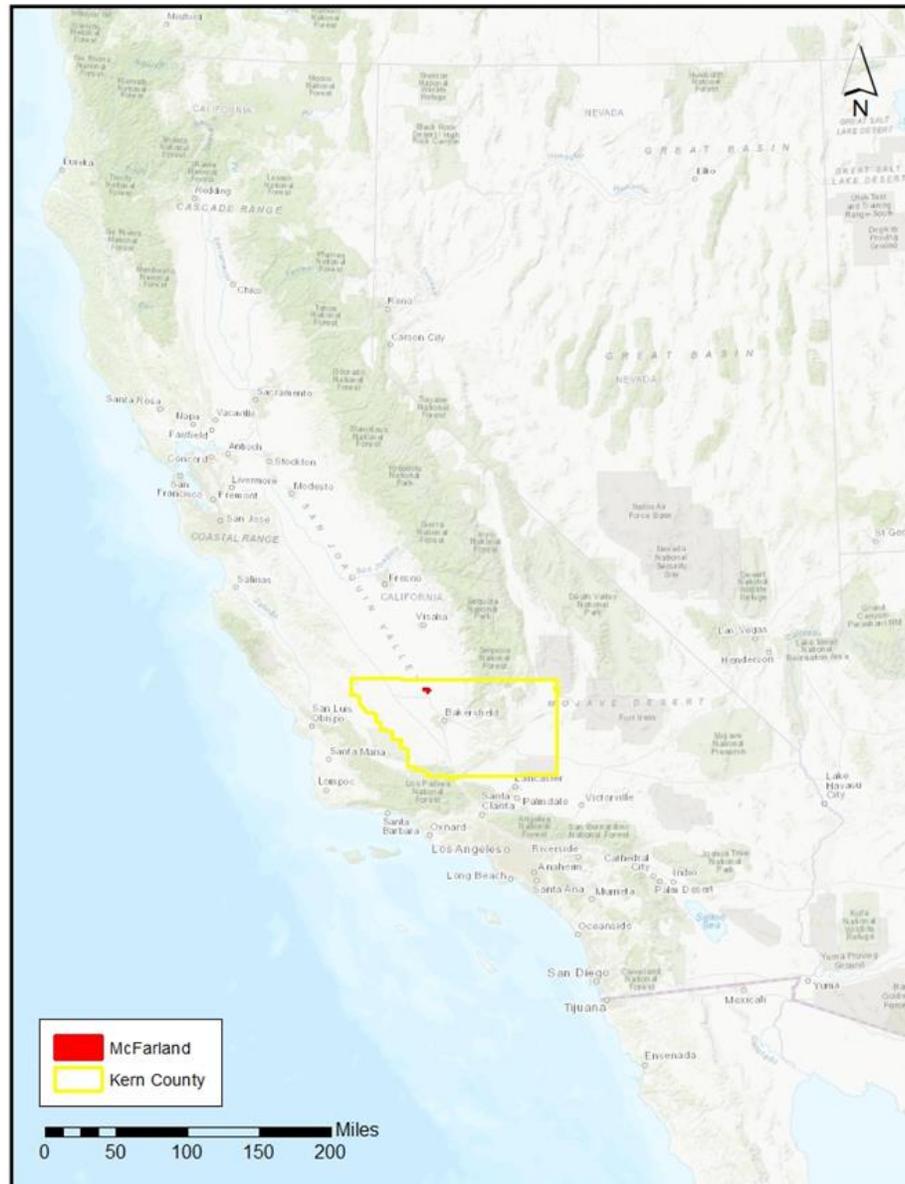
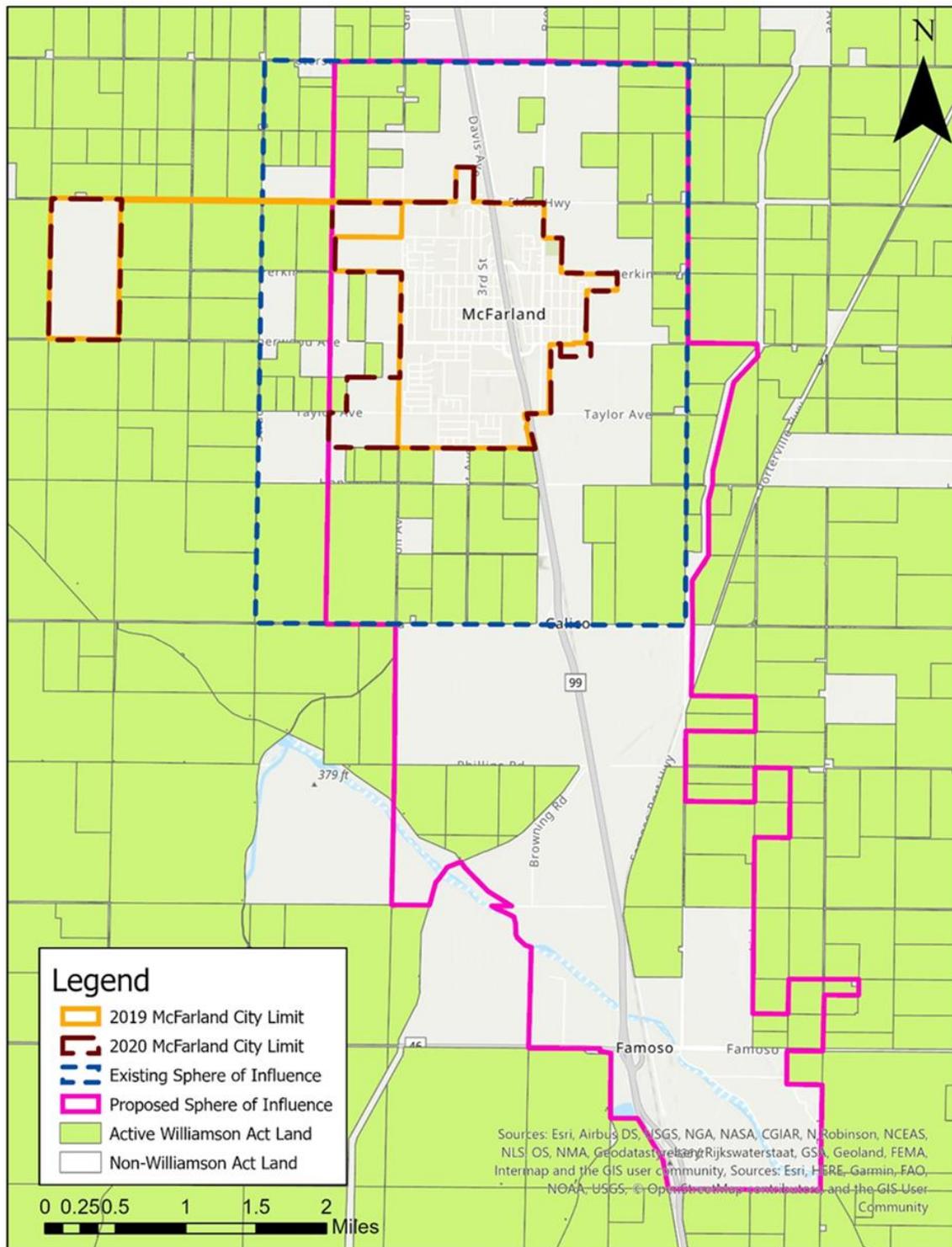


Figure 2: McFarland with Existing and Proposed Boundaries and Sphere of Influence



## Project Boundaries

A general plan must cover the territory within the boundaries of the adopting city as well as any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning; (OPR, 2017, §65300). Therefore, the Proposed Project boundary is defined by the City planning area and sphere of influence, which extends beyond the City limits.

## City Limits

The city limit encompasses incorporated territory where land use is controlled by the City (OPR, 2017). McFarland's city limit encompasses an area of approximately 1,730 acres or 2.7 square miles. Land use within McFarland's city limit includes residential, commercial, industrial, open space, public facilities, and vacant land.

## Sphere of Influence

A city's SOI, is adopted by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), and encompasses incorporated land and unincorporated territory making up the city's ultimate service area (OPR, 2017). The City of McFarland's SOI includes approximately 10,030 additional acres of unincorporated land. Land uses within the unincorporated area of the SOI are predominantly agricultural and residential.

## Planning Area

A city's planning area boundary encompasses incorporated and unincorporated territory and may extend beyond the sphere of influence (SOI) (OPR, 2017). Since a Sustainable Agriculture Element is included in this General Plan update and agricultural lands surround the City and its SOI, the "study area" (which is effectively the planning area) extends slightly beyond the proposed SOI to cover an area of approximately 23 square miles or 14,760 acres.

## Project Description

The proposed project is a comprehensive update of the City's 1991 General Plan. California law requires cities and counties to adopt a General Plan to guide future development. The General Plan is the foundation upon which all land use decisions are to be based. The Draft McFarland General Plan accommodates new housing and jobs in anticipation of population growth in the County and the region through the year 2040. The General Plan includes the following elements:

- Land Use
- Circulation
- Housing
- Conservation
- Open Space
- Noise
- Safety
- Environmental Justice
- Air Quality
- Economic Development

- Public Facilities & Service
- Community Design
- Health
- Sustainable Agriculture

The EIR to be prepared for the proposed General Plan is a “Program EIR.” According to the CEQA Handbook Article 11 Section 15168: A program EIR is an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either:

- 1) Geographically;
- 2) As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions;
- 3) In connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or
- 4) As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways.

Thus, a program level EIR evaluates the implications of environmental effects resulting from the adoption of a planning document, such as a general plan, which provides direction for long-term visioning and broad community goals. A program level EIR does not examine the specific impacts resulting from individual projects which may be proposed because of adopting the 2040 General Plan. Additional environmental review pursuant to CEQA guidelines may be required for site-specific projects, such as those requiring discretionary approval. Such environmental review may be in the form of initial studies, negative declarations, mitigated negative declarations, or the preparation of a project-level EIR.

### Project Objectives

The 2040 McFarland General Plan is intended to represent the general expectations and wishes of its residents and decision-makers concerning future land use patterns and resource management. The Plan seeks to provide a variety of residential densities, mixed-use areas, a diverse economic base, and improved connections throughout the City. This vision is reflected throughout the General Plan. The plan continues to provide that new housing and commercial enterprises are generally directed to areas that are suitable for development or are already developed. The 2040 General Plan ensures that important land use decisions are scrutinized for their potential to affect the quality of life and the environment. Implementation of the General Plan requires a balance between potentially competing interests. It is expected that future decision-makers will need to wrestle with potential trade-offs and compromises, such as maintaining a balance of housing choices, stimulating a growing economy, and protecting the natural environment. The General Plan provides the policy guidance needed to assist future decision-makers in evaluating these tradeoffs and striking a desirable balance. The purpose of community goals represented in the Draft General Plan can be summarized with the following key objectives:

- Provide a legal and comprehensive General Plan that reflects an updated vision for the City’s future and acts as a “constitution” for future development and land use decisions

- Provide an adequate supply of housing options for current and future residents including workforce housing and moderate-income housing
- Develop incentives to encourage economic development including the development of vacant and underutilized commercial parcels to generate new job growth
- Accommodate future population growth with an emphasis on concentrating new development within five key growth areas while leaving the natural landscape open for passive and active recreational use as well as agriculture.
- Promote infill and redevelopment of residential and commercial areas to reduce auto-dependency, increase job to housing balance, and foster sense of community
- Improve local transportation infrastructure and facilitate the paving of sidewalks to improve aesthetic appeal and walkability of public areas and residential neighborhoods
- Address other issues of concern to the community such as the needs of an increasingly aging population and the effects of global climate change.
- Preserve existing open spaces and agriculturally productive land consistent with the State of California vision to preserve production of authentic rather than manufactured food and to guarantee healthy and sustainable food supply to assure a healthy population and planet.

### Probable Environmental Effects

The Draft EIR will address the short-term and long-term effects of the 2040 McFarland General Plan on the environment. Mitigation measures will be proposed for those impacts that are determined to be significant. A mitigation monitoring program will also be developed as required by Section 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines.

Please review the following list and provide written comments as to any potential impacts that may be missing. Written comments received during the comment period will be considered when preparing the Draft EIR. It is probable that some or all the following environmental effects could occur from the implementation of the preferred scenario of the General Plan:

1. Aesthetics
2. Agricultural Resources
3. Air Quality
4. Biological Resources
5. Cultural Resources
6. Geology and Soils
7. Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions
8. Hazards and Hazardous Materials
9. Hydrology and Water Quality
10. Land Use and Planning
11. Mineral Resources
12. Noise
13. Population and Housing
14. Public Services
15. Recreation
16. Transportation and Traffic

## 17. Utilities, Energy and Service Systems

### Mandatory Findings of Significance

The draft EIR will address the following areas of potential impacts:

- Growth-inducing Impacts
- Cumulative Impacts
- Significant Irreversible Changes

### Alternatives

The Draft EIR will discuss four project alternatives as follows:

1. Business as Usual Scenario
2. Moderate Growth Scenario
3. Smart Growth Scenario
4. Preferred Growth Scenario

The preferred growth scenario encapsulates the proposed General Plan.