

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND SCOPING MEETING FOR THE COSTCO COMMERCIAL CENTER PROJECT

Date: October 22, 2021

To: State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Interested Parties, and Organizations

Subject: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Scoping Meeting for the Costco Commercial Center Project, Fresno, California

Lead Agency: City of Fresno
Planning and Development Department
2600 Fresno Street, Room 3043
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 621-8277

Contact: Jose Valenzuela, Planner III
Planning and Development Department
2600 Fresno Street, Room 3065
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 621-8070
Jose.Valenzuela@fresno.gov

Comment Period: October 22, 2021 – November 22, 2021

PURPOSE OF NOTICE

The Costco Wholesale Corporation (Costco) proposes to construct the Costco Commercial Center (hereafter “project”), which comprises a new Costco facility (including loading docks and internal space to provide last-mile home delivery of big and bulky items) with an attached tire center and a detached gas station and drive-through car wash in the City of Fresno. As the lead agency, the City of Fresno will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project and is issuing this Notice of Preparation (NOP) per Section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. The purpose of this NOP is to provide agencies, interested parties, and organizations with sufficient information describing the project and the potential environmental effects to enable meaningful input related to the scope and content of information to be included in the EIR. The EIR will evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the project on both a direct and cumulative basis and identify potentially feasible mitigation measures or alternatives that may lessen or avoid impacts.

The City is requesting input from the public and responsible and trustee agencies on environmental issues associated with development of the project, as described in this NOP.

Comments received during this public comment period will be used to focus the environmental analyses in the EIR.

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD AND SCOPING MEETING

This NOP is available for public review and comment for 30 days beginning October 22, 2021. The City will hold a public scoping meeting to inform interested parties about the project and provide agencies and the public with an opportunity to submit comments on the scope and content of the EIR. In response to COVID-19, the public scoping meeting will be conducted virtually on November 2, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Web link: <https://zoom.us/j/98798625753>

Call-in Information: 1-669-900-9128

Webinar ID: 98798625753

Meeting Date: November 2, 2021

Meeting Time: 6:00 p.m.

Any interested person may appear at the public hearing electronically, by either Zoom meeting or telephone. If you have any questions regarding the scoping meeting, contact Jose Valenzuela, Project Planner, at (559) 621-8070 or Jose.Valenzuela@fresno.gov. **Si necesita información en Español, comuníquese con Jose Valenzuela al teléfono (559) 621-8070 o por correo electrónico jose.valenzuela@fresno.gov.**

Submitting Comments

Comments and suggestions as to the appropriate scope of analysis in the EIR are invited from all interested parties. Written comments or questions concerning the EIR should be directed to the City's project manager at the following address. Comments must be received by **5:00 p.m. on November 22, 2021**. Please include the commenter's full name and address.

Jose Valenzuela, Planner III
Planning and Development Department
2600 Fresno Street, Room 3065
Fresno, CA 93721
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Copies of this NOP may be reviewed at the following locations:

- ▶ Fresno County Public Library during library hours;
- ▶ City of Fresno, 2600 Fresno Street, Room 3065 between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.; or
- ▶ Online at: <https://www.fresno.gov/cityclerk/notices-publications/>

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project would develop a new Costco retail building; gas station; car wash; and associated parking areas, driveways, and other supporting infrastructure. The existing Costco at 4500 West Shaw Avenue would relocate to the new facility, which would be sized to accommodate the customer base in northwest Fresno. The existing Costco gas station would be decommissioned, including removal of the underground storage tanks. The existing and proposed Costco sites are shown in Figure 1.

The project would allow Costco to expand services in the area to include a larger gas station and a car wash, as well as a loading area to facilitate last-mile home delivery of big and bulky items in the Fresno area. The Costco retail building is consistent with established zoning for the parcel; however, a re-zone and General Plan amendment would be required to permit the proposed car wash.

The project also includes a proposed General Plan amendment and rezoning to reclassify the adjacent portion of West Herndon Avenue from expressway to super arterial to allow the construction of an intersection where West Herndon Avenue meets the Arthur Avenue right-of-way. The intersection would allow project traffic to access the project site via two north-south streets, rather than solely from North Riverside Drive. This would permit easier travel for southbound drivers along North Riverside Drive, including nearby residents and visitors to the Riverside Golf Course.

Costco Wholesale facilities are operated on a membership-only basis. The warehouse and car wash hours are anticipated to be Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The fuel station would operate from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily.

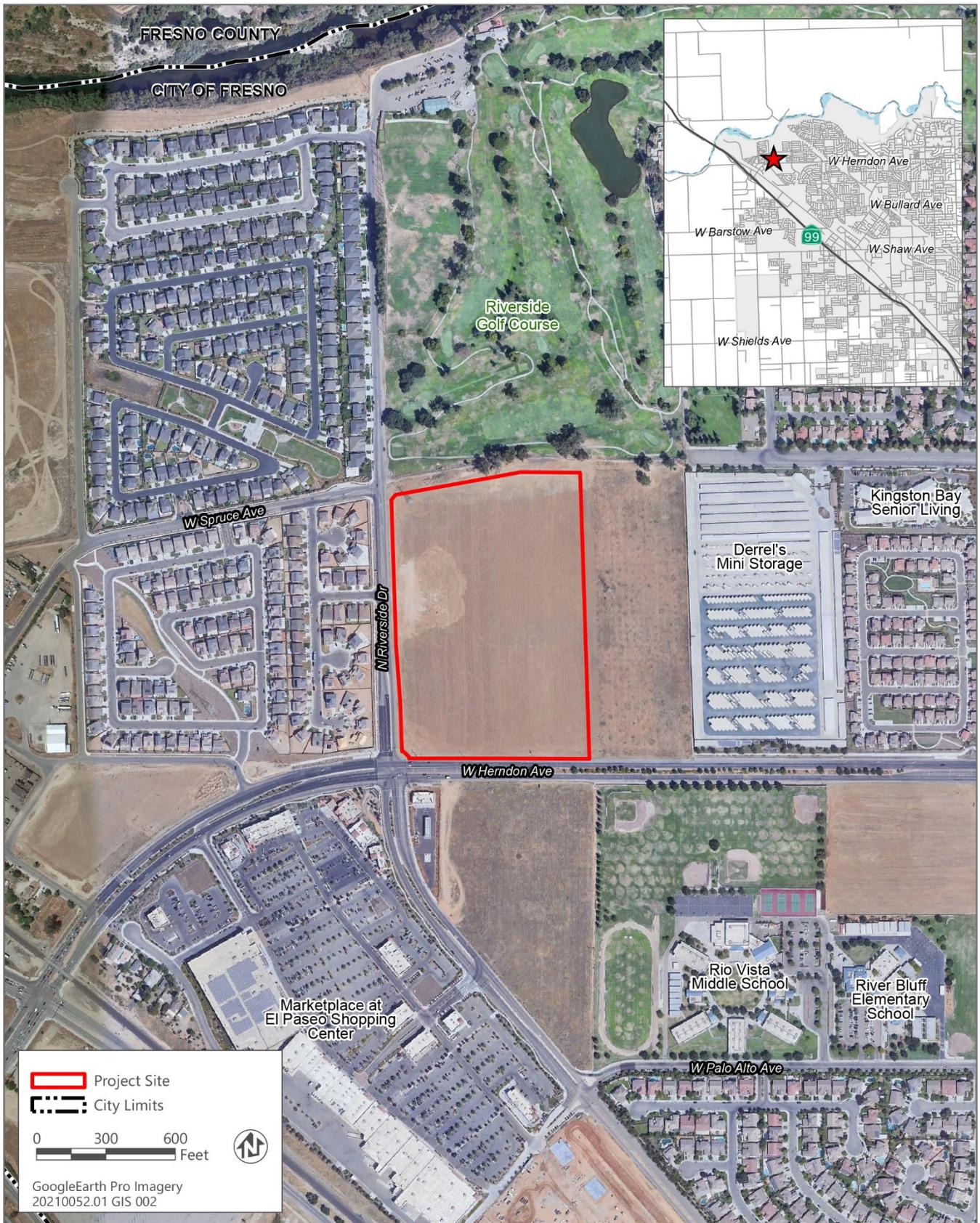
Project Location

The proposed location of the Costco Commercial Center site is a vacant 22.4-acre parcel located at the northeast corner of the intersection of West Herndon Avenue and North Riverside Boulevard in the City of Fresno. The project site is a single parcel, bordered by West Spruce Avenue to the north, the right-of-way of (currently unbuilt) Arthur Avenue to the east, West Herndon Avenue to the south, and North Riverside Boulevard to the east. The site's address is 7120 North Riverside Drive and the assessor's parcel number (APN) is 503-02-012 (Figure 2). Local access to the site is provided by West Herndon Avenue, West Spruce Avenue, and North Riverside Boulevard. Regional access is provided by State Route (SR) 99, via the West Herndon Avenue interchange approximately 0.5 mile to the southwest.



Source: adapted by Ascent in 2021

Figure 1 Regional Location of Project and Existing Costco



Source: adapted by Ascent in 2021

Figure 2 Project Location

Requested Entitlements

The project would require the following entitlements from the City of Fresno:

- ▶ A General Plan Amendment and rezoning to reclassify the portion of West Herndon Avenue fronting the project site from expressway to super arterial, to change the site's General Plan Land Use Designation from Community Commercial to General Commercial, and to change the site's zoning designation from CC (Commercial – Community) to CG (Commercial General);
- ▶ A conditional use permit (CUP) per Table 15-1202 in Section 15-1202 of the Fresno Municipal Code to establish a Large-Format Retail, Service Station, and Car Wash within the CG zone;
- ▶ A CUP per Section 15-2706 the Fresno Municipal Code to establish a new use including the sale of alcoholic beverages for off-site consumption;
- ▶ A Planned Development Permit per Section 15-59 of the Fresno Municipal Code to allow variation from the standards for parking lot lighting in Section 15-2015; and
- ▶ Approval of a Parcel Map for the subdivision of the existing parcel into two resultant parcels.

Project Elements

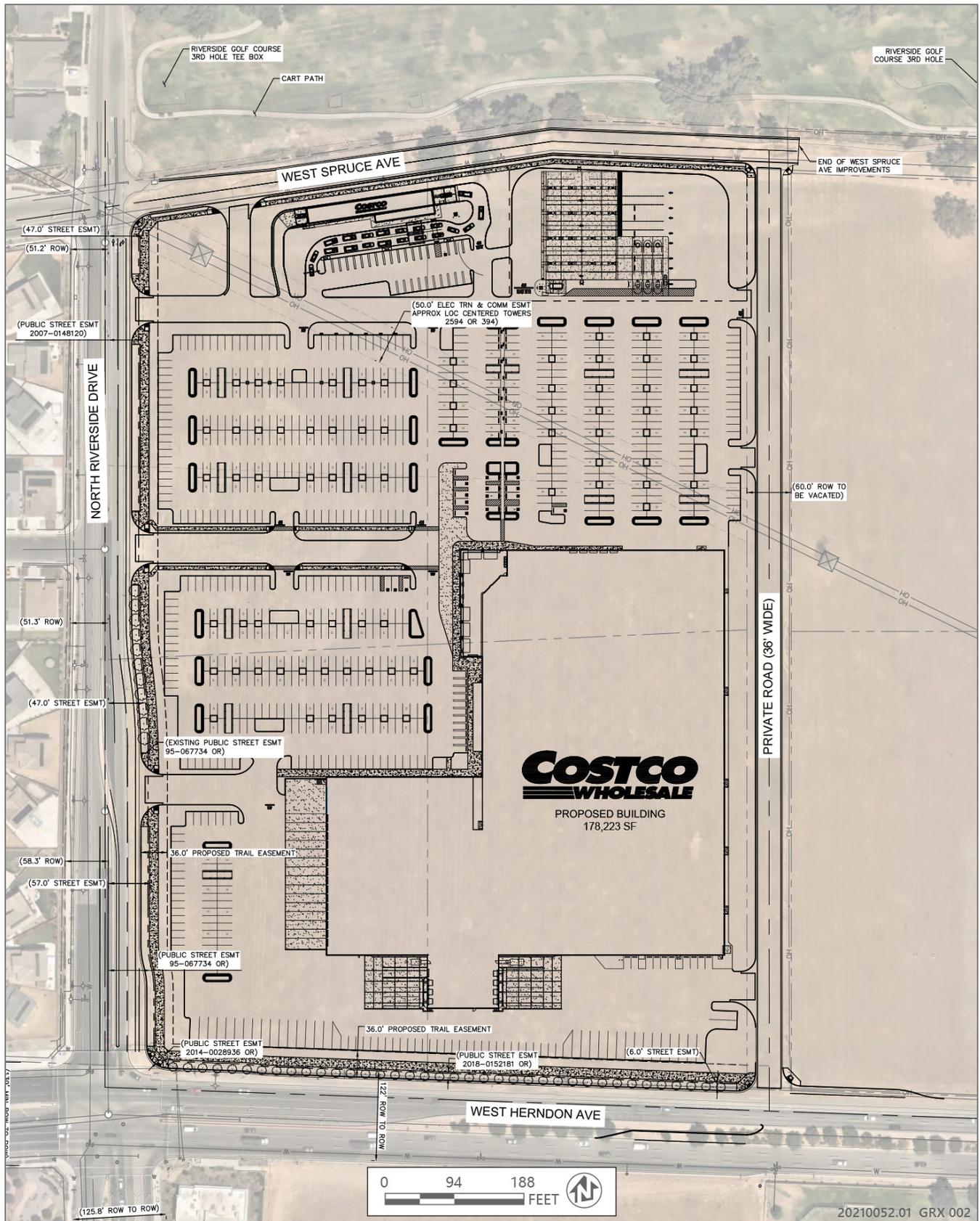
COSTCO RETAIL BUILDING

The proposed Costco building would be 178,223 square feet (sq. ft.); of which approximately 57,000 sq. ft. would be reserved for storage and receiving (Figure 3). The structure would be set in the southeastern corner of the project site, with parking provided primarily to the north and east of the building. The sales floor area would include a tire center, optical exams and optical sales, hearing aid testing and sales, food service preparation and sales, meat preparation and sales, bakery and sales of baked goods, and alcohol sales. The southwest portion of the warehouse would contain areas for receiving, storing, and loading items for last-mile home delivery of big and bulky items.

COSTCO GAS STATION

The project would include a Costco members-only gas station on the northern portion of the project site adjacent to West Spruce Avenue. The facility would include an approximately 11,500 square-foot canopy and a 125 square-foot controller enclosure. There would be four covered fueling islands, each with four two-sided fuel dispensers to provide for the fueling of eight cars at each island, for a total of 32 fueling positions. The fueling station would also have eight stacking lanes, allowing approximately 40 cars to wait for pumps at any given time in addition to the 32 cars at the dispensers. The dispensers would be fully automated and self-service. A Costco attendant would be present at all times of operation to oversee operations and assist members. Four underground fuel tanks would also be installed at the southern edge of the gas station.

Lights would be recessed into the canopy to provide both lighting during operating hours and a lower level of security lighting after hours.



Source: Image produced and provided by Kimley Horn & Associates in 2021

Figure 3 Site Plan

COSTCO CAR WASH

A Costco members-only automated carwash would be located at the northeastern corner of the project site, adjacent to the gas station. The car wash structure would be approximately 4,800 sq. ft. The car wash facility would include only the automated car wash within the structure. No self-service car vacuum stations would be provided.

SITE ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

The proposed development would provide multiple points of access to the project site. The primary entrance to the warehouse would be located along North Riverside Drive, with a full-service driveway aligned with West Fir Drive. This proposal includes the installation of traffic control devices at the intersection of West Fir Drive, North Riverside Drive, and the Costco main driveway. Two additional right-in/right-out driveways along North Riverside Drive would provide secondary vehicle access to the project site. The existing right-of-way along on the eastern edge of the project is for a private driveway, Arthur Avenue, would provide a north-south connection between West Herndon Avenue and West Spruce Drive. The Arthur Avenue roadway would meet West Herndon Avenue with right-in and right-out access from Arthur Avenue. The Applicant is also proposing a median cut on West Herndon Drive to allow left-in turning from West Herndon Drive.

At the eastern edge of the project site, two additional right-in/right-out driveways are proposed along Arthur Avenue for customer access. A third driveway is proposed along Arthur Avenue near the southern boundary of the project site that would provide delivery, service, and emergency vehicle access. The primary truck access route would be the southernmost driveway along Arthur Avenue, with a secondary truck route using the southernmost driveway along North Riverside Drive. The truck loading dock would be located on the southern facade of the building. The bay doors would be equipped with sealed gaskets to limit noise.

The project would also include construction of 12-foot-wide pedestrian and bicycle paths along the project's frontage with West Herndon Avenue and North Riverside Drive.

RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES

For the purposes of CEQA, the term "Responsible Agency" includes all public agencies other than the Lead Agency that have discretionary approval power over the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15381). Discretionary approval power may include such actions as issuance of a permit, authorization, or easement needed to complete some aspect of the proposed project.

Responsible agencies may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ▶ California Department of Transportation, District 3;
- ▶ California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Region 4;
- ▶ Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board; and
- ▶ San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The EIR will describe the direct and indirect environmental impacts of construction and operation of the project. It is anticipated that the EIR will address potential impacts in the following issue areas. In addition, the EIR will evaluate alternatives, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts.

Aesthetics

The EIR will describe the existing visual character of the project site and the surrounding suburban and rural land use conditions. The analysis will evaluate the significance of changes in the visual character and the site, including light and glare.

Agriculture

The project site is designated Farmland of Local Importance by the California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. All potentially significant direct and indirect impacts on agriculture resources that could result from project implementation will be described.

Air Quality

The EIR will describe existing air quality conditions at the project site, including the locations of nearby sensitive receptors and the applicable regulations and policies, such as the Environmental Review Guidelines and Procedures for Implementing CEQA from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The analysis will disclose construction- and operation-related emissions of criteria air pollutants and precursors, and toxic air contaminants.

Biological Resources

The project site has been previously graded and used for agriculture. A comprehensive review of the sensitive resources with potential to be affected by the project will be conducted. The likelihood of presence in the project area will be based on habitat suitability, species ranges, and documented occurrences. The EIR will assess the potential impacts of the project on biological resources.

Historic, Archaeological, and Tribal Cultural Resources

The EIR will summarize known cultural resources in the project area, applicable state and local regulations related to prehistoric, historic, and tribal cultural resources, and the results of the City's consultation process. There is the potential for buried prehistoric and historic-era resources within the project area and potential impacts to these resources during project construction will be considered in the EIR.

Energy

The EIR will summarize federal, state, and local policies and regulations concerning energy consumption and energy efficiency that would be applicable to the project, including applicable policies in the City of Fresno General Plan and the City's Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Plan. The EIR will also evaluate whether the project would include features that would make it energy efficient, including efficiency with respect to the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by motor vehicles, and the degree to which the project would comply with existing energy standards.

Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change

The analysis will apply thresholds of significance aligned with statewide and regionwide GHG targets for 2030 and beyond, including consistency with the most recent GHG Reduction Plan prepared by the City in 2014 and updated in 2020.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

The EIR will summarize the results of the Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments prepared for the project site. The EIR will identify any existing issues related to hazards and hazardous materials in the project area and identify impacts that could occur from construction and operation. The use of hazardous materials in project operation and disposal of any hazardous wastes would be subject to numerous laws and regulations at all levels of government.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The EIR will evaluate drainage, runoff, and other water quality concerns. There are no surface waters within the project site.

Land Use

The Land Use section will discuss the proposed General Plan amendment and rezoning. The evaluation will focus on consistency with applicable land use plans adopted to avoid or mitigate an environmental effect. The EIR will examine the existing land use patterns in the area and describe any potential for division or conflicts with existing communities.

Noise and Vibration

Implementing the proposed project would result in short-term and long-term increases in ambient noise levels. The EIR will include a description of the existing noise environment, including noise sources and sensitive receptors in the project area. The EIR will then assess potential short-term (i.e., construction) and long-term (i.e., operational) noise impacts to sensitive receptors.

Public Services

The conversion of the previously undeveloped project site to commercial uses would result in an increased demand for emergency services (police and fire) and other services. The EIR section will discuss the anticipated demand for services and analyze the capacity of the existing services; however, the impact analysis significance determination will be based on whether the project would trigger the need for new or expanded public facilities, the construction of which could result in significant impacts on the environment.

Transportation and Circulation

This section of the EIR will be based on a CEQA-compliant VMT analysis using City of Fresno CEQA Guidelines for Vehicle Miles Traveled adopted on June 25, 2020 that establish VMT thresholds of significance. The EIR will evaluate safety impacts and conflicts with bicycle, pedestrian, and transit plans and facilities, along with any impacts associated with geometric design features of the project (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections).

Utilities

The EIR will discuss the potential increase in demand for water supply and treatment, wastewater treatment, and solid waste from project implementation. The analysis will assess any potential for project operation to affect the ability for existing and planned facilities to meet the projected increase in demand.