

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

of a Draft Environmental Impact Report

Project Title: City of Willits Land Use Element & Sphere of Influence Updates

Project Proponent: City of Willits

Project Location: City of Willits and proposed Sphere of Influence Area

DEIR Review Period: Beginning July 25, 2024, and ending September 9, 2024

The City of Willits Community Development Department and its consultants have prepared a Draft Program EIR for the adoption of the City of Willits Land Use Element, Zoning and Sphere of Influence (SOI) Updates, State Clearing House No. 2023030321. The City is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the project. The intent of this Notice of Availability (NOA) is to notify interested parties that the Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is available for public review and comment.

Project Location: The project location includes the following: the entire City of Willits (~1,801 acres including the City center area and the Willits Municipal Airport (Ells Field) and the Willits Water Treatment Plant and Morris Dam portions of the City of Willits); the ~12 acre existing SOI along Meadowbrook Drive; and the proposed ~875 acre SOI that includes areas along West State Route 20 and Cropley Lane, along Locust Street, portions of the Mill Creek Drainage, along Muir Mill Road, along East Valley Street, and east of Grove Street.

Project Description: The proposed Project is an amendment to the City of Willits Land Use Element, Land Use Diagram, Zoning Map and Regulations, and an application to amend the City's SOI. The Project includes:

- (1) the identification of a Planning Area that includes the City as well as surrounding land that bears relation to City planning;
- (2) changes to existing and new Land Use Element policy intended to expand the land supply for housing of all types, provide for focused planning for Willits' commercial centers, provide for land use flexibility and compatibility, ensure community health and vitality and environmental health and sustainability, and to expand and improve land use designations and general plan maintenance;
- (3) changes to Land Use Designations within the City to support residential and commercial development, as well as for open space purposes, and changes to apply Land Use Designations that best reflect the use and character of existing development within the City where the current Land Use Designation is not appropriate;
- (4) proposed expansions to the City's SOI, with the application of appropriate City Land Use Designations, to support a potential SOI Amendment application to the Mendocino Local Agency Formation Commission;
- (5) amendments to the Zoning Map and Zoning Regulations to ensure consistency with the Land Use Element and Land Use Map, which may occur simultaneously with or closely following Land Element adoption, and that may include the application of consistent Zoning Classifications and edits to the Zoning Regulations to ensure consistency.

Adoption of the Plan requires certification of the EIR, a General Plan Amendment, Zoning Map and Text Amendments by the Willits City Council and an application to the Mendocino Local Agency Formation Commission to amend the City SOI.

Potential Environmental Effects of the Project: The Draft EIR finds that implementation of the proposed Project could result in significant and unavoidable impacts related to greenhouse gas emissions, even with the incorporation of mitigation measures. Impacts in all other areas were found to be less than significant or less than significant with incorporation of mitigation measures. The draft EIR provides a detailed project description, an analysis of physical environmental effects of the project, and an identification of feasible mitigation measures and alternatives that would avoid or lessen the severity of project impacts, and a summary of impacts and mitigation measures.

Availability of the Draft Program EIR: The Draft Program EIR and all documents referenced therein are available for review at this website <https://willitslanduseupdate.com/>. A physical copy of the Draft EIR is available at the City of Willits Community Development department at 111 E. Commercial Street, Willits, CA.

Draft EIR Public Review Period:

Please submit written comments by 5:00 p.m. on September 9, 2024:

- Email: dduley@cityofwillits.org.
- Mail: Dusty Duley, Community Development Director, City of Willits, Community Development Department 111 E. Commercial St., Willits CA 95490

For comments submitted via email, please include “Draft EIR Comments: Land Use Element & Sphere of Influence Updates” in the subject line and the name and physical address of the commenter in the body of the email.

Public Hearings:

Specific dates for public hearings to be held before the City of Willits City Council have not yet been set but are anticipated to occur during the months of August and September. Information regarding public hearings will be posted on the City of Willits webpage at <https://cityofwillits.org/AgendaCenter/City-Council-1> and on the project website at <https://willitslanduseupdate.com/>.