

### 2.0.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

This Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) examines the potential effects of PLAN Hermosa (proposed project). The term “proposed project,” as used in this Draft EIR, refers to PLAN Hermosa (SCH No. 2015081009), which includes the implementation of a citywide General Plan and Local Coastal Program. The proposed project is described in detail in Chapter 3.0, Project Description, and included as **Appendix A**. The project background and the legal basis for preparing a program EIR are described below.

### 2.0.2 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

This Draft EIR considers the environmental impacts that could result from implementation of the City of Hermosa Beach’s General Plan and Local Coastal Program (PLAN Hermosa; proposed project).

#### GENERAL PLAN

State law (California Government Code Section 65300) requires that each California city and county adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan to guide the physical development of the county or city. The following elements are required to be addressed as part of the general plan:

- Land Use
- Housing
- Open Space
- Safety
- Circulation
- Conservation
- Noise

The City’s current General Plan was last comprehensively updated in 1979, and the accompanying Coastal Land Use Plan was certified in 1980. The City’s Housing Element, which is also part of the General Plan, was last updated in 2013 and has been certified by the California Department of Housing and Community Development through 2021; therefore, it is not part of the proposed project.

#### LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM

To ensure maximum public access to the coast and public recreation areas, the Coastal Act directs each local government in the Coastal Zone to prepare a Local Coastal Program (LCP) consistent with Section 30501 of the California Coastal Act, in consultation with the Coastal Commission and with public participation. The Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR) 2003 General Plan Guidelines suggest integration of the general plan and the local coastal program into a “coherent and internally consistent local general plan.” As such, the City of Hermosa Beach has decided to update both the General Plan and the LCP together as an integrated document. The General Plan and LCP update addresses land use; mobility; parks, recreation, and open space; coastal access; coastal hazards; water quality; air quality and climate change; noise; and other issues that are important to the community. The LCP addresses portions of Hermosa Beach located in the Coastal Zone and consists of two parts:

- A Coastal Land Use Plan, which is presented as a component of the General Plan; and
- A Local Implementation Plan, which is presented as a component of the City’s Municipal Code.

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The Coastal Zone boundary is defined by the California Coastal Act as “extending seaward to the state’s outer limit of jurisdiction, including all offshore islands, and extending inland generally 1,000 yards from the mean high tide line of the sea” (Public Resources Code Section 30103). The Coastal Zone in the city spans the entire length of the city from north to south and extends from the mean high tide line inland to roughly Ardmore Avenue with two exclusions—the area from Hermosa Avenue to Valley Drive between Longfellow Avenue and 31st Place, and the area east of Park Avenue or Loma Drive between 25th Street and 16th Street. **Figure 3.0-2 (Hermosa Beach Corporate Boundary)** shows the extent of the Coastal Zone in the city.

In order to achieve certification from the Coastal Commission and attain local control over the issuance of Coastal Development Permits, Hermosa Beach must update the Coastal Land Use Plan and prepare and adopt a Local Implementation Plan that collectively consider and address emerging coastal issues such as beach management, parking, water quality, sea level rise, and climate change.

### 2.0.3 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING/DEFINITION OF THE BASELINE AND EIR ASSUMPTIONS

According to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15125, an EIR must include a description of the existing physical environmental conditions in the project vicinity to provide the “baseline condition” against which project-related impacts are compared. Normally the baseline condition is the physical condition that exists when the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published. The NOP for the PLAN Hermosa EIR was published on August 7, 2015, and a public scoping meeting was held on August 18, 2015 (see **Appendix B-1**). **Table 2.0-1 (Summary of NOP Comments)** summarizes the NOP comment letters received (see **Appendix B-2** for full comment letters).

**TABLE 2.0-1  
SUMMARY OF NOP COMMENTS**

Commenter	Date of Comment	Summary of Comments
Scott Morgan, Acting Director Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR)	August 6, 2015	The letter was sent to responsible agencies and requested their comment on the NOP.
Jim Lissner, Hermosa Beach Resident	September 8, 2015	The commenter includes statistics for various crimes and states that they are increasing in Hermosa Beach and that crime rates are higher than in Manhattan Beach. Additionally, the commenter states that neighborhoods with more alcohol outlets tend to experience more violence and injury. Further, the commenter is concerned that Hermosa Beach’s move toward requiring fewer on-site parking spaces for downtown restaurants will permit greater outlet density and bring increased crime.
Adriana Raza, Customer Service Specialist, Facilities Planning Department Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County	September 8, 2015	Will-serve letter stating that the County will be able to accommodate the increase in population associated with the General Plan update. The commenter discusses the wastewater conveyance system (i.e., how much waste the conveyance system can accommodate). The commenter states that no known deficiencies exist in the districts’ facilities that serve the city. The commenter further states that the district will provide wastewater service up to the levels that are legally permitted; however, the letter does not serve as a guarantee of wastewater service.

Commenter	Date of Comment	Summary of Comments
Kevin Johnson, Acting Chief, Forestry Division Prevention Services Bureau Los Angeles County Fire Department	August 25, 2015	The commenter states that statutory responsibilities of the Los Angeles County Fire Department include erosion control, watershed management, rare and endangered species, vegetation, fuel modification for Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones or Fire Zone 4, archaeological and cultural resources, and the County Oak Tree Ordinance. The commenter states that potential impacts to these issue areas should be addressed.
Ping Chang, Program Manager II, Land Use and Environmental Planning Southern California Association of Governments	September 8, 2015	The commenting agency states that they review environmental documents for consistency with the adopted Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) (2012). The commenter also states that the goals in the RTP/SCS may be pertinent to the project and should be reviewed. Strategies to achieve those goals are included in the SCS chapter.
Dianna Watson, IGR/CEQA Branch Chief California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), District 7	September 3, 2015	The commenter states that modifications made to Pacific Coast Highway will require a permit from Caltrans. The commenter also states that the traffic impact analysis (TIA) associated with the project should evaluate existing and long-term impacts of future development plans on the roadway system as well as active transportation facilities in the planning area and adjacent jurisdictions. The TIA should also include an evaluation of potential traffic impacts to the regional transportation system including Interstate 405, as it provides access to the city via the Artesia interchange.
Ken Chiang, Utilities Engineer, Safety and Enforcement Division California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC)	August 10, 2015	The project site includes active railroad tracks over which the CPUC has jurisdiction. The commenter recommends mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts associated with new development.
Alan Benson, Resident	August 18, 2015	The commenter requests that the City address an increase in alcohol outlet density and the correlation with the increase in the rate of violent crime and what changes to the General Plan could address these in the future. The commenter includes a report that examines the relationship between alcohol outlet density by community and alcohol-related harms.
Ian MacMillan, Planning and Rules Manager South Coast Air Quality Management District	August 13, 2015	The commenter suggests that any potential adverse air quality impacts that could occur from all phases of the project and all air pollutant sources related to the project be analyzed.
Jeff Duclos, Resident	August 18, 2015	The commenter discusses concerns over lack of discussion of carbon neutrality and potential changes to land use/livable streets in the EIR. Also would like to look to the future, for a 20-year model instead of focusing on existing standards—as future residents will have different ideals from current residents. The commenter identified concerns over the planned residential development new units projected between 2015 and 2040. The commenter thinks that such projected growth is impossible to accommodate, “the housing stock does not exist.”
Dency Nelson, Resident	August 18, 2015	The commenter wants the City to review reports about sea level rise and its effects on Hermosa Beach.

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Commenter	Date of Comment	Summary of Comments
George Schmeltzer, Resident	August 18, 2015	The commenter asks if this EIR will prevent the need to do future EIRs in the future. The commenter expresses concern about other large development projects being covered under the EIR. The commenter asks what the term “alternative” means, and why the project is a project under CEQA. The commenter then asks if the EIR would allow a 300 net housing unit increase, and where that would take place. Further, the commenter discusses the importance of livable streets in Hermosa Beach and regulating building height.
Justin Massey, Resident	August 18, 2015	The commenter is glad that a programmatic EIR was chosen so that the City can tier off it in the future. The commenter thinks that the alternatives are very important to discuss and analyze. The commenter then says he is worried about the viewshed from various parts of the city, air and water pollution, how the plan will contribute to climate change, and mobility and transportation. The commenter says he doesn't just want to see raw numbers on walkability/mobility but is concerned with how it will affect the average community member walking down the street. The commenter says that the City must think about the quality of life of residents as well as the environment. Finally, the commenter wants to extend the period of comment beyond 45 days.

Source: Data compiled by Michael Baker International, 2015

For analytical purposes, impacts associated with implementation of PLAN Hermosa are derived from the existing environmental setting in 2015. This baseline year (2015) is used throughout this EIR to determine impacts.

Evaluations in this EIR are based on reasonable assumptions of development activity anticipated to occur over the next 25 years in the planning area, which consists of the existing city boundaries. To determine reasonable assumptions for the amount of new residential, commercial, and population growth, the City assumed a range of factors, including the physical capacity of the PLAN Hermosa Land Use Map, the projected growth assumed in the city and the region, specific policy direction in PLAN Hermosa, and socioeconomic trends. This analysis includes forecasts of the number of new residences, amount of new employment, and increase in population anticipated to occur under PLAN Hermosa.

This EIR presents a conservative scenario based on the potential development from 2015 through 2040. As a practical matter, as illustrated under the current General Plan, actual development in any city or county is typically less than the theoretical limit of development. This is a result of market forces, as well as building and zoning standards when applied to specific sites, which often results in the construction of less than the maximum allowable development.

This EIR also evaluates the physical environmental impacts of the implementation of PLAN Hermosa policy provisions.

### 2.0.4 PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

This EIR evaluates the impacts of PLAN Hermosa. It is a program EIR, as described in CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Sections 15000 et seq. [14 CCR 15000 et seq.]).

According to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(a), a state or local agency should prepare a program EIR, rather than a project EIR, when the lead agency proposes the following:

- A series of related actions that are linked geographically;
- Logical parts of a chain of contemplated events, rules, regulations, or plans that govern the conduct of a continuing program; or
- Individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects that can be mitigated in similar ways.

A program EIR “may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related...in connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15168[a][3]). This program EIR considers a series of actions related to implementation of PLAN Hermosa.

As a program EIR, this document focuses on the overall effect of PLAN Hermosa. The analyses in this EIR do not examine the effects of site-specific projects that may occur under this plan in the future. The nature of general plans is such that many proposed policies are intended to be general, with details to be worked out during implementation. This EIR does, however, quantify impacts related to transportation, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, noise, and other topics, making reasonable assumptions as to the amount, type, and character of land use change anticipated with implementation of PLAN Hermosa.

### TIERING AND STREAMLINING

The City will make use of existing streamlining provided by CEQA, emerging streamlining techniques, such as those related to implementation of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Sustainable Communities Strategy (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21155), and other streamlining techniques that may become available in the future. The City has invested substantial resources in PLAN Hermosa and its EIR, and wishes to promote fiscally prudent use of this EIR, once it is certified, to accommodate development consistent with PLAN Hermosa.

Tiering refers to a multilevel approach to preparing environmental documents set forth in PRC Section 21083.3 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15152. This program EIR’s analysis is considered the first tier of environmental review upon which future, project-specific CEQA documents can build, as necessary. Environmental analysis for future projects consistent with PLAN Hermosa can be streamlined to allow subsequent documents to focus on new or site-specific impacts (CEQA Guidelines Sections 15168[d] and 15183).

These provisions of CEQA allow a lead agency to narrow the focus of project-level analysis to effects upon the environment that are peculiar to the parcel or project. The Public Resources Code also limits the effects that can be considered peculiar in project-level analysis under the program EIR.

Section 15152 of the CEQA Guidelines provides that where a first-tier EIR has “adequately addressed” the subject of cumulative impacts, such impacts need not be revisited in second- and/or third-tier documents. According to Section 15152(f)(3), significant effects identified in a first-tier EIR are adequately addressed, for purposes of later approvals, if the lead agency determines that such effects have been either:

- Mitigated or avoided as a result of the prior [EIR] and findings adopted in connection with that prior [EIR]; or

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- Examined at a sufficient level of detail in the prior [EIR] to enable those effects to be mitigated or avoided by site-specific revisions, the imposition of conditions, or by other means in connection with the approval of the later project.

The Public Resources Code provides streamlining coverage to the City of Hermosa Beach and other public agencies that have authority to implement PLAN Hermosa. Public agencies can use uniformly applied policies or standards to mitigate effects of future projects, avoiding the need to analyze these effects, unless new information arises that changes the impact analysis (PRC Section 21083.3[d]). For this reason, this EIR includes references to PLAN Hermosa policies and implementation actions, where appropriate, to address environmental impacts. Future CEQA documents can reference the same PLAN Hermosa policies and actions, where appropriate, to demonstrate less than significant impacts. The City may consider specific plans, area plans, corridor plans, downtown core area plans, or other documents to implement PLAN Hermosa in a smaller geographic area of the city.

The City acknowledges and intends to make best use of the advantages to the programmatic approach to environmental analysis and reporting in this EIR. As noted in CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(b):

*Use of a program EIR can provide the following advantages. The program EIR can:*

- 1) *Provide an occasion for a more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives than would be practical in an EIR on an individual action;*
- 2) *Ensure consideration of cumulative impacts that might be slighted in a case-by-case analysis;*
- 3) *Avoid duplicative reconsideration of basic policy considerations;*
- 4) *Allow the Lead Agency to consider broad policy alternatives and program wide mitigation measures at an early time when the agency has greater flexibility to deal with basic problems or cumulative impacts; and*
- 5) *Allow reduction in paperwork.*

### 2.0.5 PUBLIC REVIEW OF DRAFT EIR AND LEAD AGENCY CONTACT

City of Hermosa Beach  
Community Development Department (Planning Division)  
1315 Valley Drive  
Hermosa Beach, CA 92054

The public review and comment period is 70 days from October 26, 2016 through January 5, 2017. Written public comments on the Draft EIR must be received no later than 6:00 PM on January 5, 2017. Written comments or questions regarding the Draft EIR should be addressed to:

Ken Robertson  
City of Hermosa Beach Community Development Department (Planning Division)  
1315 Valley Drive  
Hermosa Beach, CA 92054  
[generalplan@hermosabch.org](mailto:generalplan@hermosabch.org)

Following the public review period, a Final EIR will be prepared. The Final EIR will respond to written comments received during the public review period. The City Council will review and consider the Final EIR prior to their decision to approve, revise, or reject the proposed project.

### **2.0.6 SCOPE OF THIS DRAFT EIR**

As lead agency, the City determined that this Draft EIR will address the following technical issue areas:

- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise and Vibration
- Population and Housing
- Public Services, Community Facilities, and Utilities
- Transportation

The specific topics evaluated are described in each of the resource sections presented in Chapter 4.0.

### **2.0.7 HOW TO USE THIS REPORT**

This report includes the following principal parts: Executive Summary, Project Description, Environmental Analysis (Impacts and Mitigation Measures), Other CEQA-Required Considerations, Alternatives, Abbreviations, Report Preparers, and Appendices.

- Executive Summary (Chapter 1.0) presents an overview of the results and conclusions of the environmental evaluation. This chapter identifies impacts of the proposed project and available mitigation measures.
- Project Description (Chapter 3.0) describes the location of the project, existing conditions in the planning area, and the nature and location of specific elements of the proposed project.
- Environmental Analysis (Chapter 4.0) includes a topic-by-topic analysis of impacts that would or may result from implementation of the proposed project or alternatives. The analysis is organized into 14 resource sections, each of which is organized into two major subsections: Environmental Setting and Regulatory Setting (a summary of existing conditions), and Impacts and Mitigation Measures. The Impacts and Mitigation Measures subsection also describes cumulative impacts and mitigation measures. **Appendix C**, the PLAN Hermosa Technical Background Report, provides additional detail regarding the environmental and regulatory setting for each resource section.
- Other CEQA-Required Considerations (Chapter 5.0) discusses issues required by CEQA: unavoidable adverse impacts, irreversible environmental changes, growth inducement, and a summary of cumulative impacts.
- Alternatives to the Proposed Project (Chapter 6.0) includes a description of the project alternatives. CEQA requires an EIR to provide adequate information for decision-makers to make a reasonable choice between alternatives based on the environmental aspects of the proposed project and alternatives. The impacts of the alternatives are qualitatively compared to those of the proposed project. This chapter also identifies the environmentally superior alternative.
- Report Preparers (Chapter 7.0) includes a list of the preparers of the EIR.

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- The Appendices contain a number of reference items providing support and documentation of the analyses performed for this report. They are included on a CD inserted in the back cover of the EIR.