

4.9 LAND USE, POPULATION AND HOUSING

4.9 LAND USE, POPULATION, AND HOUSING

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) for the proposed Mitchell Ranch Center project addresses the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project associated with land use, population, and housing. Existing land uses at the project site and surrounding properties are characterized in the context of the City of Ceres General Plan, Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan, and other adopted plans and policies. This section also identifies population trends in the region. The analysis in this section focuses on land use compatibility, the proposed project's consistency with the General Plan and Specific Plan, and population growth. Information for this section was obtained primarily from applicable land use plans, the U.S. Census, site reconnaissance, and aerial photography.

Following publication of the Notice of Preparation/Initial Study (NOP/IS), a comment letter was received from Sherri Jacobson that identified potential conflicts between the proposed project and surrounding residential land uses and churches in the vicinity of the project site. Impacts related to land use conflicts are addressed under Impact 4.9.2, Adjacent Land Use Compatibility.

4.9.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

LAND USE

Regional Setting

The project site is located in the City of Ceres, about 75 miles south of Sacramento and 75 miles east of San Francisco, in Stanislaus County. Stanislaus County is situated in central California, bordered by San Joaquin and Calaveras counties to the north, Tuolumne and Mariposa counties to the east, Merced County to the south, and Santa Clara and Alameda counties to the west. See **Figure 3.0-1** for a regional map of the project area.

Population growth and related land use changes in the Central Valley have been transitioning from more agriculturally oriented, small communities to larger, residential communities. This shift is occurring in Stanislaus County as well as in other Central Valley communities. According to 2006 data, Stanislaus County spans almost 1,500 square miles and has a total population of 512,000, with approximately 300 persons per square mile (U.S. Census, 2007).

Local

The project site is located in the City of Ceres, which encompasses approximately 7.08 square miles, or 4,535 acres of incorporated land. Within the boundaries of the city limits are unincorporated pockets of land that are under the jurisdiction of Stanislaus County (City of Ceres, 1997).

The project site is located on the southeastern edge of the City of Ceres near State Route 99 (SR 99), a major transportation route through the county and the state. It lies to the south and west of the project site, providing access to the site from an interchange at Service Road.

The City of Ceres, like other communities in Stanislaus County and the Central Valley, has expanded largely through conversion of agricultural lands to urbanized and residential uses and with the annexation of land that had already begun to transition toward urban development under the County's jurisdiction. Please see Section 4.11, Agricultural Resources, of this Draft EIR for a detailed discussion of impacts resulting from the conversion of agricultural lands.

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Project Site

The project site is located at the northwest corner of Mitchell Road and Service Road. The site consists of five parcels totaling approximately 26.3 acres. The site is primarily vacant land, once used for agricultural purposes, and, at the time of the NOP in September 2007, contained four abandoned residential structures. Portions of the project site have curb, gutter, and sidewalk, but the remaining areas are not improved.

SURROUNDING LAND USES

The project site is surrounded by residential and commercial uses. The site is located at the development edge of the City with denser, more developed lands to the north and the west of the project site and less developed lands to the east and south.

Don Pedro Road abuts the project site to the north. The area beyond Don Pedro Road has some existing commercial buildings at the intersection with Mitchell Road, as well as existing single-family homes and a church. Service Road abuts the site to the south, beyond which is undeveloped land. This area includes the approved, though yet to be constructed, Ceres Gateway Center at the southwest corner of Service Road and Mitchell Road. The Ceres Gateway Center will include two hotels and approximately 26,000 square feet of various commercial uses.

Mitchell Road abuts the project site to the east. There is land developed as strip retail and an Arco gas station across Mitchell Road from the project site. There is also a large church complex (St. Jude's Parish) across Mitchell Road, as well as undeveloped areas of land. The area abutting the site to the west includes vacant parcels and single-family residential uses. An apartment complex is located approximately 100 feet west of the project site off of Don Pedro Road.

POPULATION AND HOUSING

Historically, the City of Ceres had a small population, with approximately 6,000 residents in 1970. The population more than doubled during the 1970s, reaching 13,000 in 1980. By 1990, the population had doubled again and reached 25,000. High population growth rates during this period and into the 1990s have been attributed to increases in local employment and an increasing commuter population having jobs in the San Francisco Bay Area and San Joaquin County. The City's General Plan indicates the expectation that these sources of population growth will continue into the future.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Ceres had a population of 34,609 in 2000 and a growth rate of 31.5 percent from 1990 to 2000. The California Department of Finance provides estimates of total population for cities and counties throughout the state. Population estimates for the City of Ceres were 41,787 as of January 1, 2007, and 42,813 as of January 1, 2008, an annual growth rate of approximately 2.5 percent. The Stanislaus County population was estimated at 518,938 as of January 1, 2007, and 525,903 as of January 1, 2008.

The 2000 Census identified the total number of housing units in Ceres at 10,773. The California Department of Finance provides estimates for the total number of housing units in the City. As of January 1, 2008, the total number of housing units was estimated to be 13,279.

4.9.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

LOCAL

The project area is identified and addressed in several regional and local planning documents including the City of Ceres General Plan, the Stanislaus County Airport Land Use Commission Plan, the Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan, the City of Ceres Zoning Ordinance, and the Stanislaus County General Plan. General Plan land use designations in the vicinity are illustrated in **Figure 3.0-3**. The project site is designated RC, Regional Commercial, as is much of the land immediately surrounding the site. The City of Ceres General Plan Environmental Impact Report did not identify any significant and unavoidable impacts resulting from land use changes as outlined by the General Plan. Further, the City of Ceres General Plan EIR states that the housing and population-related impacts of the General Plan are less than significant.

City of Ceres General Plan

The City of Ceres General Plan was adopted in February 1997 and serves as the overall guiding policy document for land use, development, and environmental quality for the City. The Land Use and Community Design Element identifies goals, policies, and implementation programs related to land use and population growth. **Table 4.9-1** outlines the General Plan policies relevant to the proposed project and this section of the Draft EIR, and provides analysis of the project’s consistency with these policies.

Land use policies that address new residential development, industrial development, or other land uses that are not associated with the proposed project are not included for analysis in this Draft EIR. Policies that are related to the subject of land use, but which are intended to minimize a particular issue (i.e., traffic, noise, aesthetics), are also not included in this section. The reader is referred to the appropriate sections of this Draft EIR for analysis of the project’s consistency with those policies.

While this Draft EIR identifies and analyzes the consistency of the proposed Mitchell Ranch Center project with the General Plan pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15125(d), the City of Ceres will ultimately make the determination of the project’s consistency with the General Plan. Environmental impacts associated with any potential inconsistency with the General Plan are addressed under the appropriate impact discussion sections of this Draft EIR.

**TABLE 4.9-1
PROJECT CONSISTENCY WITH CITY OF CERES GENERAL PLAN POLICIES: LAND USE AND POPULATION**

General Plan Policy	Consistency with General Plan	Analysis
<p>Policy 1.A.1. The City shall strive to preserve Ceres' traditional small-town qualities (e.g., family-oriented environment, stable neighborhoods, lack of traffic congestion, ease in traveling within the city, personal safety, community involvement), while increasing its residential and employment base.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The project site is designated for regional commercial development. Consistent with this policy, the proposed project would increase the employment base. The proposed project has been designed to preserve the existing residential neighborhoods in the area by orienting buildings away from residences, providing screening between the site and residences, and directing most project-related</p>

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General Plan Policy	Consistency with General Plan	Analysis
		traffic away from residential streets such as Don Pedro Road. The proposed project will also result in the enhancement of the quality of the area by providing street improvements including sidewalks and street trees where necessary.
Policy 1.A.6. The City shall create gateways to provide distinctive entrances to Ceres, particularly along the key access points along the SR 99 corridor, at the major entrances on Mitchell Road and at transitions from Modesto to Ceres on Crow’s Landing Road.	Yes	The proposed project will be on the intersection of two major access points to the City: Mitchell Road and State Route 99. Implementation of the project, combined with other commercial development in the vicinity (e.g., the Ceres Gateway Center) will create a regional commercial center and promote this area as a gateway to the City.
Policy 1.A.7. The City shall seek to enhance the appearance of its major corridors as important structural elements in Ceres’ physical identity, and as a feature to improve Ceres’ image in attracting economic development.	Yes	The proposed project will result in a regional commercial center along the major corridor of Mitchell Road within the City. The project will include the installation of sidewalks, street trees, an improved circulation system, and other structural elements that will contribute to the physical identity of this area as a commercial corridor.
Policy 1.B.3. The City shall ensure that future development occurs in an orderly sequence based on the logical extension of public facilities and services.	Yes	The proposed project will occur at the development edge within the City and will not require substantial or non-contiguous expansion of public facilities and services, as discussed in Section 4.12, Public Services, Utilities, and Service Systems, of this Draft EIR.
Policy 1.B.7. The City shall promote infill development and reuse of underutilized parcels in the city, consistent with maintaining or enhancing the positive qualities of the surrounding neighborhoods.	Yes	The project site is located in Phase 1 of the City’s Urban Growth Area and is designated for regional commercial development. The parcels are currently underutilized as the site consists of mostly vacant land. Implementation of the project would result in full utilization of the site according to the City’s vision for the area. The site is contiguous to and generally surrounded by urban development within the City.
Policy 1.B.11. The City shall require development project design to reflect and consider natural features, noise exposure of residents, visibility of structures, circulation, access, and the relationship of the project to surrounding uses. Residential densities, building intensities and lot patterns will be determined by these and other factors. As a result, the maximum densities and intensities specified by General Plan designations or zoning for a given parcel of land may not be realized.	Yes, with mitigation	These issues are addressed throughout this environmental impact report. The environmental topic area sections (e.g., Section 4.1, Aesthetics and Visual Resources, Section 4.10, Noise, and Section 4.13, Transportation and Traffic) identify impacts related to visual resources, noise, traffic, etc. and impose mitigation measures to address project-related impacts.
Policy 1.I.2. The City shall support the development of primary wage-earner job opportunities to provide Ceres residents an	Yes	The proposed project would be expected to employ a total of 580 employees of which 375 are being transferred from the existing Walmart,

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General Plan Policy	Consistency with General Plan	Analysis
alternative to commuting outside Ceres.		many of which would likely be residents of Ceres.
Policy 1.I.3. The City shall seek the development of new businesses, especially those that provide primary wage-earner jobs, by designating adequate land and providing infrastructure in areas where resources and public facilities and services can accommodate employment generators.	Yes	As noted above, the proposed project would be expected to employ a total of 580 employees of which 375 are being transferred from the existing Walmart. The site is in an area that can be served by public services and facilities as discussed in Section 4.12, Public Services, Utilities, and Service Systems. The project applicant is required to pay its fair share of development costs associated with infrastructure improvements.
Policy 1.J.1. The City shall promote improvements to its major corridors to make them distinctive and inviting. The City shall pay special attention to entrances along major corridors.	Yes	The proposed project is located along the major corridor of Mitchell Road and the Service Road. Improvements made to transportation, street trees, and sidewalks and the development of vacant and run-down parcels will result in overall improvements to this area.
Policy 1.J.5. The City shall provide for buffers and transitions between commercial uses in major corridors and adjacent residential uses.	Yes	The proposed project is within the State Route 99 and Mitchell Road corridors. There are residential uses immediately adjacent to the project site. As required by the Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan, an 8-foot-high solid masonry wall and 10-foot-wide landscape buffer will be provided where the project site abuts residential uses. Furthermore, Don Pedro Road will separate the existing residential uses to the north from the project site, and the proposed future road will separate the existing residential uses to the west from the project site.
Policy 1.K.1. The City shall support improvements to the interchange of Mitchell Road at SR 99 to allow for the development of a regional commercial area, as shown in Figure 1-5 of the General Plan.	Yes	The proposed project includes the development of region-serving commercial land uses, and the project applicant will contribute its fair share to the completion of the SR 99/Mitchell Road interchange project.
Policy 1.K.7. The Master Plan, or amended <i>Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan</i> , shall include the outline for a centralized retail management program for the pedestrian-oriented specialty retail area that addresses the following: a. Tenant recruitment. b. Times of operation. c. Coordinated promotion. d. Employee parking. e. Public safety. f. Retail uses located within the public space. g. Signs h. Maintenance of common space.	Yes	The proposed project will include pedestrian features and will not conflict with the goals of this policy.

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General Plan Policy	Consistency with General Plan	Analysis
<p>Policy 6.A.1. The City shall discourage leapfrog development and development in peninsulas extending into agricultural lands to avoid adverse effects on agricultural operations.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The project site is located near State Route 99 in Phase 1 of the City's Urban Growth Area. The site is surrounded by a mix of residential and commercial uses with minimal agricultural production. The areas north and west of the site are generally developed, and the proposed project represents a logical extension of growth and development. Properties adjacent to the site are zoned for urban development with some development projects already being processed by the City. The site is within the City of Ceres city limits, and the proposed project is not considered leapfrog development and will not create a peninsula extending into an agricultural area.</p>

The City's designated Urban Growth Area encompasses all land envisioned for development as part of Ceres through the year 2015. This Urban Growth Area is divided into two phases of development. The project site is located in the Phase 1 Urban Growth Area. The phasing is intended to result in the development of the Phase 1 area prior to development of the Phase 2 area.

As noted above, the City of Ceres General Plan designates the land use for the project site as Regional Commercial (RC). **Figure 3.0-3** shows the land use designations for the project site and surrounding property.

Generally, the Regional Commercial designation has been used by the City for areas surrounding the project site located within the State Route 99 corridor near the intersection of Mitchell Road and Service Road. The RC General Plan land use designation provides for region-serving commercial uses, including large-scale shopping centers, wholesale "club" type stores, factory outlets, and other commercial uses including retail stores, food and drug stores, apparel stores, specialty shops, motor vehicle sales and service, home furnishings, durable goods, real estate offices, restaurants, entertainment uses, florists, hotels/motels, and other similar uses that serve a community-wide and/or regional market.

Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan

The Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan, adopted by the City of Ceres in September 1995, establishes comprehensive guidance and regulations for the development of approximately 450 acres located along a portion of Mitchell Road between State Route 99 and the Tuolumne River, including the project site. **Table 4.9-2** outlines the Specific Plan policies relevant to the proposed project and this section of the Draft EIR and provides analysis of the proposed project's consistency with these policies. While this Draft EIR identifies and analyzes the proposed project's consistency with the Specific Plan pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d), the City of Ceres will ultimately make the final determination of the project's consistency with the Specific Plan. Environmental impacts associated with any potential inconsistency with Specific Plan goals, objectives, or policies are addressed under the appropriate impact discussion sections of this Draft EIR.

**TABLE 4.9-2
PROJECT CONSISTENCY WITH MITCHELL ROAD CORRIDOR SPECIFIC PLAN POLICIES: LAND USE AND POPULATION**

Specific Plan Policy	Consistency with Specific Plan	Analysis
Policy P4. Provide buffers and transitions between commercial uses and adjacent non-commercial uses.	Yes	The proposed project consists of a large-scale commercial area that is adjacent to residential uses. As required by the design guidelines contained in the Specific Plan, the project design would include buffer zones with walls and landscaping where the project abuts non-commercial uses.
Policy P7. Provide incentives and measures to avoid breaking up of existing large parcels into small, separate, unrelated development projects.	Yes	The proposed project does not divide large parcels into separate unrelated projects. Instead, the project would combine several smaller parcels and create one unified large project as described in Section 3.0, Project Description.
Policy P12. Assure compatibility between park and open space areas and any new development within the Specific Plan area.	Yes	The proposed project does not require the construction of additional park or open space areas, nor is the project adjacent to such areas.
Policy P13. Incorporate open space areas into the design of development projects proposed for the corridor when feasible.	Yes	The proposed project, as currently designed, does not include any open space areas beyond the required buffer zones and parking lot landscape islands. At the corner of Mitchell and Service Roads the site plan shows a small pedestrian plaza incorporated as an extension of the sidewalks along both roadways. The proposed project is considered consistent with this policy because open space is not identified as a use for the Regional Commercial land use designation.

The Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan land use designation for the project site and surrounding areas is already identified in the City’s General Plan, as shown on **Figure 3.0-3**. The Specific Plan recognizes the General Plan land use designation for the project site as Regional Commercial (RC). The Specific Plan states that the RC designation “is intended to provide for and promote concentrations of large-scale commercial uses such as department stores, outlet stores, or big “box” retail, furniture stores and other large retail-service uses which serve the needs of the city, surrounding area, and its neighboring communities.”

City of Ceres Zoning

Zoning for the project area is established by the Development Regulations section of the Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan. As discussed above, the project is consistent with the policies, regulations, and use list established by the Mitchell Road Specific Plan for the project area.

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Stanislaus County Airport Land Use Commission Plan

The Stanislaus County Airport Land Use Commission adopted an Airport Land Use Commission Plan (ALUCP) in August 1978 and amended the plan in May 2004. The ALUCP describes the planning area boundaries and land use plans for each of the five airports under the Commission's jurisdiction including the Modesto City-County Airport (Harry Sham Field). The Plan also identifies compatible uses and building standards for land within the airport's planning boundary areas and safety zones.

The project site is located within the airport's Planning Boundary Area 4 or "Other Land Within the Planning Area." The following standards apply to development within this area, including the proposed project site:

1. Usage should be airport oriented or be compatible with airport location.
2. Non-reflective materials to be used in buildings and signs where reflection would cause a flying hazard.
3. Soundproofing where appropriate to reduce noise to acceptable level according to state guidelines.
4. No electromagnetic transmissions which would interfere with operation of aircraft.
5. All bulk storage of volatile or flammable liquid should be underground.
6. Lights for any purpose shall be constructed and used in such a manner as not to create a hazard for pilots or air traffic control.

In addition to these project-specific standards, the ALUCP also contains several general policies related to the operation of the Airport Land Use Commission, its interactions with local jurisdictions, and development within the airport's planning boundaries. Please see Section 4.7, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, in this Draft EIR and **Table 4.7-4** for analysis of the project's consistency with the policies of the Stanislaus County Airport Land Use Commission Plan. Environmental impacts associated with inconsistency with ALUCP goals and policies are addressed under the appropriate impact discussion sections of this Draft EIR.

4.9.3 PROJECT IMPACT ANALYSIS

STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, land use, population, and housing impacts are considered significant if they would result in any of the following:

- Physically divide an established community.
- Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to, the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental impact.
- Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.

- Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (e.g., by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (e.g., through extension of roads or other infrastructure).
- Displace substantial numbers of people and/or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

The Initial Study prepared for the proposed project (see **Appendix 1.0-1**) determined that implementation of the proposed project would have a less than significant impact related to the division of an established community, conflicts with habitat conservation plans, and the displacement of housing and people. Therefore, these issues will not be addressed further in this Draft EIR. However, in addition to those thresholds of significance that are addressed, the Draft EIR evaluates whether the proposed project would conflict with surrounding land uses.

METHODOLOGY

This evaluation of potential land use conflicts analyzes the consistency of the proposed project with the type and intensities of the existing and planned land uses on and surrounding the project site. Potential land use conflicts or incompatibility are typically the result of other environmental effects, such as the generation of noise, traffic, or objectionable odors. Potential land use conflicts resulting from the effects of project construction and operation are summarized here. The reader is also referred to other Draft EIR sections (e.g., Noise, Aesthetics and Visual Resources, Transportation and Traffic, etc.) for more detailed discussions of other relevant environmental effects.

Evaluation of potential land use impacts associated with the proposed project was based on review of applicable land use planning documents including the City of Ceres General Plan, City of Ceres Zoning Code, Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan, and Stanislaus County General Plan, as well as consultation with appropriate agencies and field review of the project site and surrounding areas.

The evaluation of population and housing impacts is based on applicable land use planning documents and associated environmental documents, as well as census data and the Economic Impact Analysis prepared for the proposed project by Bay Area Economics in August 2008.

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Consistency with Applicable Land Use Plans

Impact 4.9.1 Proposed land uses are consistent with the land use designation for the project site as established in the City of Ceres General Plan and Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan. The proposed project is also consistent with the Stanislaus County Airport Land Use Commission Plan. However, implementation of the proposed project may result in conflicts with City of Ceres General Plan Land Use policy 1.B.11. Nevertheless, this impact is considered **less than significant**.

The City of Ceres General Plan and the Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan, which establish the development regulations applicable to the site, both designate the project site as Regional Commercial. This land use designation provides for region-serving commercial uses, including

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large-scale shopping centers, wholesale “club” type stores, and other commercial uses including retail stores and restaurants.

The Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan indicates that the Regional Commercial land use designation requires a conditional use permit for bars and restaurants located within 300 feet of a property occupied by residential units or a property zoned for residential uses. This policy is intended to prevent noise and other conflicts resulting from the atmosphere surrounding bars and restaurants. The proposed project will include restaurants that may serve alcoholic beverages adjacent to residential uses and will, therefore, require approval of a conditional use permit.

The Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan identifies the requirements for a proposed conditional use to be permitted. The City of Ceres Planning Commission is responsible for the review and approval of applications for a conditional use permit or, when a comprehensive project including a use permit will go to the City Council for approval, the Planning Commission will review the use permit application and provide recommendations for consideration by the City Council. The application process and associated requirements can be found in the Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan and, where not specified, the City of Ceres Zoning Ordinance.

As noted above, in addition to the General Plan and the Specific Plan, the proposed project is also within the Stanislaus County ALUCP Modesto City-County Airport Planning Boundary Area 4, Other Land Within the Planning Area. The uses proposed for the site, including retail stores and restaurants, are compatible uses within this planning boundary, as the potential for aircraft incidents or accidents in the area is low and large gatherings of people are acceptable. The orientation and design of the proposed project is compatible with the airport location. In addition, the Modesto City-County Airport Manager was contacted regarding the “white roof” that is proposed as an energy efficiency feature for the Walmart portion of the proposed project. According to Mr. Jerome Thiele, the Airport Manager, the white roof would be compatible with airport operations.

Although the proposed project is consistent with the land use designations for the project site, and compatible with the Stanislaus County ALUCP, General Plan Policy 1.B.11 states that the City shall require development project design to reflect and consider natural features, noise exposure of residents, visibility of structures, circulation, access, and the relationship of the project to surrounding uses. There are various aspects of the proposed project design, as submitted in the application and reflected in the project description, which have the potential to cause excessive noise levels at adjacent residences, create visibility issues for adjacent residents and users of the area, affect circulation and access, and affect the relationship of the proposed project to surrounding land uses.

These impacts are analyzed in various sections of the Draft EIR, including Section 4.1, Aesthetics and Visual Resources; Section 4.10, Noise; and Section 4.13, Transportation and Traffic. Mitigation measures are contained in these sections to address the impacts created by the proposed project. The implementation of these mitigation measures will ensure that impacts related to potential inconsistency with General Plan Policy 1.B.11 will be **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are necessary beyond those provided for in the relevant sections of the Draft EIR, as discussed above.

Adjacent Land Use Compatibility

Impact 4.9.2 The proposed project may conflict with adjacent land uses. This impact is considered **less than significant**.

Land use designations surrounding the project site include High- and Low-Density Residential, Business Park, Light Industrial, Regional Commercial, and Highway Commercial. The proposed project is considered compatible with the uses occupying the Business Park, Light Industrial, Regional Commercial, and Highway Commercial land use designations. Those uses generally operate during similar hours to uses in the Regional Commercial land use designation, have similar types of traffic, and are not as sensitive to nuisances as residential areas. However, construction of the proposed project adjacent to existing and planned residential uses in the High- and Low-Density Residential land use designations could result in environmental effects related to noise, odors, traffic, lighting and aesthetics, etc.

Potential impacts relating to adjacent land uses, including residential uses and churches, are addressed in the applicable sections of this Draft EIR, including Section 4.1, Aesthetics and Visual Resources; Section 4.2, Air Quality; Section 4.10, Noise; and Section 4.13, Transportation and Traffic. Mitigation measures contained in these sections will minimize project impacts to adjacent land uses. In addition, where the project site abuts land zoned for residential uses, the proposed project would implement site design measures including buffer areas and walls to reduce the potential for land use incompatibility. These buffers, as required by the Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan, will be a minimum of 10 feet wide and will contain 8-foot-high masonry walls and landscaping. The design guidelines also require project lighting to be shielded and directed downward to prevent light spillage onto adjacent properties.

As described under Impact 4.9.1, the proposed project is consistent with the General Plan and Specific Plan land use designations for the project site. Further, the City of Ceres General Plan EIR did not identify any significant and unavoidable impacts associated with the adjacency of land uses identified and proposed in the General Plan. While traffic, noise, air quality, and aesthetic/light and glare impacts could result from the project and are addressed in this Draft EIR, there is no inherent land use conflict presented by the location of the project proximate to residential or other land uses in the vicinity. Therefore, the proposed project would have a **less than significant** impact regarding land use conflicts.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are necessary beyond those provided for in the relevant sections of the Draft EIR, as discussed above.

Population Growth

Impact 4.9.3 Implementation of the proposed project may result in direct population growth. Additionally, the proposed project may contribute to indirect population growth along the City's edge. This impact is **less than significant**.

The proposed project does not include the construction of any new homes. However, it does include the development of a large regional shopping center that would create a substantial number of new jobs in the region. The creation of new jobs has the potential to result in direct population growth by attracting workers and their families from outside the area. Additionally, the proposed project would result in the expansion of urban development into a partially undeveloped area at the City's edge. The expansion of roadways and infrastructure associated

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with the proposed project has the potential to facilitate additional development and indirectly induce population growth in the area.

The City of Ceres and the surrounding area are experiencing very strong growth. The City's estimated population growth was nearly 3 percent annually since 2000. Similarly, the City has experienced strong growth in employment with nearly 16,000 employed residents in 2006. Despite this growth, the current unemployment rate in the City of Ceres is relatively high. The BAE 2008 report indicated unemployment at 10.1 percent at the time of their report (BAE 2008). Recent estimates prior to release of the DEIR indicate unemployment as high as 23.4 percent in February 2010 (California EDD). These data indicate that the City has an adequate population and worker base available to provide the needed employees for operation of the proposed project. Therefore, the project is not expected to result in a significant influx of workers to the City.

Implementation of the proposed project will result in the improvement of area roadways and the expansion of public infrastructure on the site. The project site is located adjacent to several major utility service lines, including sewer mains, water lines, storm drainage lines, cable television lines, and electrical lines. Infrastructure will be extended into the project site to serve the proposed project; however, the proposed project will not result in the construction of major new infrastructure that would trigger additional development in the vicinity of the proposed project. Further, the area surrounding the project site is currently partially developed and is planned for further urban development as part of the Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan and the City of Ceres General Plan. The City has already planned for and now encourages development of this area consistent with the General Plan and the Specific Plan. Implementation of the proposed project would not indirectly result in any unplanned growth.

The potential for development of the project site with regional commercial uses to induce direct and/or indirect population growth in the City of Ceres was also identified and analyzed in the City of Ceres General Plan and associated EIR. The General Plan EIR concluded that potential population growth impacts resulting from buildout of the General Plan area, including the project site, would be less than significant. The policies and land use designations of the General Plan were intended to accommodate growth projected by the Stanislaus Area Association of Governments (SAAG, now StanCOG) (City of Ceres, 1996). The proposed project would not result in any additional, unanticipated population growth.

The analysis contained in the General Plan EIR adequately addresses potential direct and indirect population growth that may result from development of the project site. The proposed project will not conflict with these plans and policies nor result in population growth beyond the levels anticipated in the General Plan. This impact is **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

4.9.4 CUMULATIVE SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

CUMULATIVE SETTING

CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 requires that environmental impact reports include an analysis of the cumulative impacts of a project when the project's effect in combination with other similar projects is considered cumulatively considerable. The cumulative setting for the proposed project, as it relates to land use and planning, is the City of Ceres and adjacent communities

such as the cities of Modesto and Turlock, and unincorporated areas of Stanislaus County around the City of Ceres. Growth envisioned by local city general plans, the Stanislaus County General Plan, and the Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan is also considered to be reasonably foreseeable development in the project area.

METHODOLOGY OF ANALYSIS

The following analysis is based primarily on applicable land use planning documents including the City of Ceres General Plan and Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan, as well as site reconnaissance of the project site and surrounding area. Analysis of impacts related to population growth is based primarily on information obtained from the U.S. Census, the Ceres General Plan and Program EIR, and the Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan. The proposed project's potential to result in cumulative population growth was analyzed in consideration of other pending and approved development projects in the area as described in **Table 4.0-1**.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Cumulative Conflicts with Applicable Land Use Plans

Impact 4.9.4 The project, in combination with other reasonably foreseeable development in the City of Ceres and Stanislaus County, could result in land use conflicts. However, land use conflicts are expected to be site-specific, and the project would have a **less than cumulatively considerable** contribution to cumulative land use impacts.

Under cumulative conditions, planned, pending, approved, and reasonably foreseeable projects in the cumulative setting area have the potential to create land use conflicts with existing uses. Land use conflicts result when incompatible land uses are placed adjacent to or in the vicinity of each other. The proposed project will place commercial development adjacent to residential uses, which can result in land use conflicts such as project noise, odors, increased traffic, and aesthetic impacts. As described in Impact 4.9.1, impacts resulting from the project due to land use conflicts are less than significant. In the cumulative condition, additional commercial development is anticipated in the vicinity of the proposed project, including hotels. Further, development in the area will be based on buildout of the commercial land uses designated in the City of Ceres General Plan and the Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan.

Commercial development in the vicinity of the proposed project would result in impacts to surrounding residential uses. Land use conflicts resulting from the proposed project would contribute to cumulative land use conflicts with adjacent residential uses. Land use conflicts related to noise, traffic, air quality, aesthetics and lighting, and hazards/human health and safety issues, are discussed in the relevant sections of this Draft EIR. Mitigation measures are contained in these sections to address the impacts created by the proposed project. Land use and planning impacts associated with existing, planned, pending, approved, and reasonably foreseeable projects in the cumulative setting area would generally be site-specific. Further, potential land use impacts associated with this project are site-specific and, as discussed above, are consistent with the City of Ceres General Plan and the Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan. Therefore, the project would have a **less than cumulatively considerable** contribution to land use impacts.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

4.9 LAND USE, POPULATION, AND HOUSING

Contribution to Long-Term Population Growth

Impact 4.9.5 Implementation of the proposed project, in combination with other reasonably foreseeable development in the area, would result in cumulative direct and/or indirect population growth in the City of Ceres. This is considered a **less than cumulatively considerable** impact.

In addition to the proposed project, there is substantial residential and commercial development planned for the City that has the potential to result in direct and indirect population growth.

As determined under Impact 4.9.3, the proposed project will not individually have a significant impact on the City's population as it will not result in the construction of any new housing or the attraction of a substantial number of new workers from outside the area.

Together with other planned development in the City, the proposed project does have the potential to contribute to and result in cumulative population growth. Such growth is analyzed in the City of Ceres General Plan and EIR. The General Plan EIR determined that population growth impacts that will result as the General Plan area is developed would be less than significant as the General Plan is intended to accommodate projected growth rather than create new growth. Therefore, development in the City consistent with the General Plan will have a less than significant impact related to population growth and the issue has been fully addressed in the General Plan EIR. The proposed project is consistent with the General Plan land use designations for the site and will not induce population growth beyond that identified in the City of Ceres General Plan EIR. The proposed project's contribution to this impact is **less than cumulatively considerable**.

Mitigation Measures

None required

REFERENCES

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4.9 LAND USE, POPULATION, AND HOUSING

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