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## **6.0 LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT**

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This section discusses the additional topics statutorily required by CEQA. The topics discussed include cumulative impacts, significant irreversible environmental changes/irretrievable commitment of resources, significant and unavoidable environmental impacts, and growth-inducing impacts that are identified in environmental issue areas in EIR Section 4.0.

### 6.1 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(a), an environmental impact report must discuss cumulative impacts when the incremental effect of a project is cumulatively considerable. CEQA Guidelines Section 15355 defines cumulative impacts as "two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts." "Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of an individual project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects (CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[c]). Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time (CEQA Guidelines Section 15355[b]).

Section 15130(b) of the CEQA Guidelines identifies the following three elements as necessary for an adequate cumulative impact analysis:

- 1) A list of past, present and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including if necessary those projects outside the control of the agency (list approach); or a summary of projections contained in an adopted General Plan or related planning document, or in a prior environmental document which has been adopted or certified, which described or evaluated regional or area-wide conditions contributing to the cumulative impact (plan approach).
- 2) A summary of expected environmental effects to be produced by those projects, with specific reference to additional information stating where that information is available.
- 3) A reasonable analysis of the cumulative impacts of the relevant projects. An EIR shall examine reasonable and feasible options for mitigating or avoiding the contribution of a proposed project to any significant cumulative effects.

The CEQA Guidelines require the use of only one method of cumulative analysis - the list approach or the plan approach. For this EIR, the list approach was utilized.

Since issuance of the NOP, several developments have occurred or been approved in the project area. These include a recently constructed Chevron gas station at the southeast corner of Service Road and Mitchell Road. The Ceres Gateway Center, approved by the City in May 2008, will include approximately 26,000 square feet of commercial uses in multiple buildings and two three-story hotels with a total of 157 rooms. Additionally, a new restaurant has been constructed north of the Arco gas station at the corner of Service Road and Mitchell Road, and two commercial buildings have been constructed east and south of the new Chevron gas station. These projects were approved after completing their own CEQA analysis, and were consistent with the City's development plans for the area. The cumulative analysis in each EIR section addressed impacts associated with development consistent with the City's General Plan and the Mitchell Road Specific Plan.

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### SUMMARY

The project site is recognized as being within the *Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan* area of the City of Ceres. The *Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan*, adopted by the City 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.

The Specific Plan designates the project site Regional Commercial (RC) which "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." The proposed project is consistent with the General Plan and Specific Plan land use designations for the site. 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 visual impacts related to adjacent residential land uses could result from the project and from cumulative development in the area, there are no land use conflicts in the cumulative context of this project and other development in the area.

Implementation of the proposed project will result in the widening and signalization of adjacent roadways planned by the City since 1990. The project site is located along an arterial street (Mitchell Road) and near a major highway interchange, and is adjacent to major utility service lines. The proposed project will not result in the construction of major new infrastructure that would trigger additional development in the vicinity. Further, the area surrounding the project site is either already developed or undergoing development consistent with the *Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan* and the City of Ceres General Plan.

As noted in this EIR, most of the impacts associated with the proposed project are less than cumulatively significant in all but a few topic areas. Cumulative impacts will be less than significant in subject categories including: aesthetics and visual resources; biological resources; cultural resources; economics and blight; geology and soils; hazards and hazardous materials; hydrology, drainage and water quality; land use, population and housing; noise; public services, utilities and service systems; and energy.

### 6.2 SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(b) requires an EIR to discuss unavoidable significant environmental effects, including those that can be mitigated but not reduced to a level of insignificance. In addition, Section 15093(a) of the CEQA Guidelines allows the decision-making agency to determine whether the benefits of a proposed project outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental impacts of implementing the project. The City can approve a project with unavoidable adverse impacts if it prepares a "Statement of Overriding Considerations" setting forth the specific reasons for making such a judgment.

The reader is referred to the various environmental issue areas of Section 4.0 and, 5.0 for further details and analysis of the significant and unavoidable impacts identified below.

**Section 4.2 Air Quality*****Long term Operational Emissions of Criteria Air Pollutants******Conflict with Applicable Air Quality Plans***

**Impact 4.2.1** Implementation of the proposed project, even with mitigation, has the potential to result in violations or contributions to existing violations of air quality standards and could, therefore, conflict with one or more applicable air quality plan. As noted above, the SJVAPCD adopted Rule 9510 - Indirect Source Review (ISR). Compliance with ISR, however, does not mitigate all impacts with respect to PM<sub>10</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub>. Results of the analysis indicate that the project will exceed significance thresholds established by the SJVAPCD for emissions of ozone precursors, NO<sub>x</sub>, and particulate matter during long-term project operational activity, even with implementation of on-site mitigation measures. Therefore, operational emissions have the potential to violate or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation, and the project is not considered to be consistent with the applicable SJVAPCD AQAP. This impact is considered **significant and unavoidable**.

See additional discussion for Impact 4.2.1 in Section 4.2, Air Quality.

***Contribution to Cumulative Air Quality Standard Violations***

**Impact 4.2.9** Implementation of the proposed project would individually result in significant emissions of criteria air pollutants and would, therefore, result in a cumulatively considerable impact to the existing regional air quality conditions. The results of the project's air quality analysis indicate that the project's long-term ROG, NO<sub>x</sub> and particulate matter emissions would be significant on an individual project basis. In addition, the mitigation measures provided in this section would not reduce emissions to less-than-significant levels and no other feasible mitigation measures are available. Therefore, the project's cumulative impact to air quality from operational emissions is considered **cumulatively considerable**, and **significant and unavoidable**.

See additional discussion for Impact 4.2.9 in Section 4.2, Air Quality.

**Section 4.11 Agricultural*****Conversion of Agricultural Land***

**Impact 4.11.4** Implementation of the proposed project, along with other proposed development would contribute to cumulative impacts on agricultural lands. Implementation of the proposed project would result in the conversion of approximately 16.7 acres of land classified as Prime Farmland. There are a number of other recently approved and planned future development projects within the City of Ceres and surrounding area that will likely also result in the loss of Important Farmlands depending on their individual locations. In particular, the City is preparing a specific plan for a large area located west of the City in unincorporated Stanislaus County. This area is almost entirely classified as Important Farmland. Therefore, the project, in combination with the other planned development projects, would result in a cumulatively considerable

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impact to the agricultural resources of the region and would contribute to the statewide loss of farmland. The project's contribution is a **cumulatively considerable** impact and **significant and unavoidable**.

See additional discussion for Impact 4.11.4 in Section 4.11, Agricultural Resources.

### Section 4.13 Transportation and Traffic

#### Level of Service

**Impact 4.13.2** Development of the proposed Mitchell Ranch Center project could exceed a level of service standard established by the City of Ceres or Caltrans for designated roads or highways. This impact is considered **potentially significant**.

Four intersections' impact will remain significant and unavoidable in the Existing Plus Project conditions, even with the implementation of mitigation measures. In some cases even with payment of fees to the City, some improvements may not be implemented, if the intersection is located in Caltrans right-of-way and neither the City nor the applicant control the timing of the improvement, the impact could remain significant and unavoidable until the improvements are constructed. The significant and unavoidable impacts associated with the project are summarized as (# refers to intersection numbers in the tables of the DEIR):

- #5 - Service Road/Moffett Road
- #7 - Service Road/El Camino Avenue intersection
- #11 - NB SR 99 and On/Off Ramp and Mitchell Road intersection
- #12 - SB SR 99 and On/Off Ramp and Mitchell Road intersection

See additional discussion for Impact 4.13.2 in Section 4.13, Transportation and Circulation.

#### Traffic Volume and Capacity

**Impact 4.13.7** The proposed project may cause an increase in traffic that is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume-to-capacity ratio on roads, or reduction in level of service), during the cumulative plus project condition. This impact is **cumulatively considerable**.

Six intersections' impact will remain significant and unavoidable under both the Cumulative No Project and Cumulative Plus Project conditions, even with the implementation of mitigation measures. One roadway segment and one freeway mainline and service ramp will also remain impacted even after mitigation by the project and payment of fees. In some cases even with payment of fees to the City, some improvements may not be implemented, if the intersection is located in Caltrans right-of-way and neither the City nor the applicant control the timing of the improvement, the impact could remain significant and unavoidable until the improvements are constructed. The significant and unavoidable impacts associated with the project are summarized as (# refers to intersection numbers in the tables of the DEIR):

- #4 - Service Road/Central Avenue intersection

- #6 - Service Road/Lucas Road intersection
- #7 - Service Road/El Camino Avenue intersection
- #11 - NB SR 99 and On/Off Ramp and Mitchell Road intersection
- #12 - SB SR 99 and On/Off Ramp and Mitchell Road intersection
- #13 - Don Pedro Avenue

Portions of State Route 99 mainline and service ramp junctions, south of Mitchell Road to north of Service Road and ramp merge/diverge areas at the Mitchell Road/Service Road interchange.

See additional discussion for Impact 4.13.7 in Section 4.13, Transportation and Circulation.

### 6.3 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

#### INTRODUCTION

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15126.2(d) requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluate the growth-inducing impacts of a proposed action. A growth-inducing impact is defined by the CEQA Guidelines as follows:

*The way in which a proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Included in this are projects which would remove obstacles to population growth... It is not assumed that growth in an area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.*

A project can have direct and/or indirect growth inducement potential. Direct growth inducement would result if a project, for example, involved construction of new housing. A project would have indirect growth inducement potential if it established substantial new permanent employment opportunities (e.g., commercial, industrial or governmental enterprises), or if it would involve a construction effort with substantial short-term employment opportunities that would indirectly stimulate the need for additional housing and services to support the new employment demand. Similarly, a project would indirectly induce growth if it would remove an obstacle to additional growth and development, such as removing a constraint on a required public service. A project providing an increased water supply in an area where water service historically limited growth could be considered a growth-inducing project.

The CEQA Guidelines further explain that the environmental effects of induced growth are considered indirect impacts of the proposed action. These indirect impacts or secondary effects of growth may result in significant, adverse environmental impacts. Potential secondary effects of growth include increased demand on other community and public services and infrastructure, increased traffic and noise, and adverse environmental impacts such as degradation of air and water quality, degradation or loss of plant and animal habitat, and conversion of agricultural and open space land to developed uses. Growth inducement also may constitute an adverse impact if the growth is not consistent with or accommodated by the land use plans and policies for the area affected. Local land use plans set forth land use development patterns and growth policies that allow for the orderly expansion of urban development supported by adequate urban public services.

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### COMPONENTS OF GROWTH

The timing, magnitude, and location of land development and population growth in a community or region are based on various interrelated land use and economic variables. Key variables include regional economic trends, market demand for residential and non-residential uses, land availability and cost, the availability and quality of transportation facilities and public services, proximity to employment centers, the supply and cost of housing, and regulatory policies or conditions. Since the general plan of a community defines the location, type and intensity of growth, it is the primary means of regulating development and growth in California.

### GROWTH INDUCEMENT POTENTIAL

As described in Chapter 3.0, Project Description, 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. However, the current unemployment rate in the City of Ceres is relatively high at 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 will not likely result in a significant influx of workers to the City.

The proposed project would result in a sizable expansion of urban development in an area of the City that is already undergoing urban development. The improvement of roadways and infrastructure associated with the proposed project has the potential to facilitate and serve additional development and indirectly induce growth in the area. However, the proposed project will not, by itself, result in the construction of major infrastructure improvements that do not already exist and that would trigger additional development within the vicinity of the proposed project. As described in Section 4.9, Land Use, the area surrounding the project site is planned for further urban development as part of the Mitchell Road Corridor Specific Plan and the City of Ceres General Plan. Planning and development of infrastructure to serve the Mitchell Road Corridor is already underway.

### GROWTH EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

As described in Section 4.9, Land Use, Population and Housing, the 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. 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 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. Therefore, the proposed project would not have a significant growth-inducing effect.

### SECONDARY EFFECTS OF GROWTH

Potential secondary effects of growth include increased demand on other community and public services and infrastructure, increased traffic and noise, and adverse environmental impacts such as degradation of air and water quality, degradation or loss of plant and animal habitat, and conversion of agricultural and open space land to developed uses. The project will not induce secondary effects on growth as the project site is virtually surrounded by parcels

already designated for, and substantially undergoing, development, and infrastructure to serve the project will not directly open areas for development that are not already designated for development pursuant to the City's General Plan.

### 6.4 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Public Resources Code Sections 21100(b)(2) and 21100.1(a) require that an environmental impact report include a discussion of significant irreversible environmental changes of project implementation. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c) describes irreversible environmental changes as follows:

*Uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the project. Irrecoverable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.*

Implementation of the proposed Mitchell Ranch Center would result in the conversion of 16.7 acres of Prime Farmland for farmland and grazing land reducing the amount of Important Farmland by approximately 0.004 percent in Stanislaus County. The Ceres General Plan (1996) designates the project site for urban development, and the General Plan EIR identified the conversion of agricultural land to urban uses as a significant and unavoidable consequence of adopting and implementing the General Plan. The City adopted a finding that the 1996 General Plan would result in the conversion of approximately 3,000 acres of land classified as Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance to urban development, and that this significant and unavoidable impact was outweighed by the benefits of implementing the Plan. Development of the proposed project would constitute a long-term commitment to urban land uses. It is unlikely that circumstances would arise that would return any developed land to its original undeveloped condition. Therefore, conversion of open space and agricultural land to urban development is considered a significant irreversible environmental effect.

The project will contribute long term operational emissions of air pollutants from vehicle emissions that will exceed significance thresholds established by the SJVAPCD for emissions of ozone precursors, NO<sub>x</sub>, and particulate matter. The implementation of measures that would require the construction of pedestrian and bicycle facilities within and adjacent to the project site may reduce mobile source emissions by accommodating alternative modes of transportation in the project vicinity. The project's cumulative impact to air quality from operational emissions is considered significant and unavoidable.

In addition, implementation of Mitchell Ranch Center development would result in increased traffic and deficient service levels to portions of the SR 99 mainline south of Mitchell Road to north of Service Road and ramp merge/diverge areas at the Mitchell Road/Service Road interchange. As this improvement is not fully funded by the City and is located on the State Highway system, neither the City nor Project Applicant can control the timing or implementation of the mitigation. If improvements to the SR 99 interchange are not completed, this cumulative impact to the state highway network would remain significant and irreversible.

Development of the Mitchell Ranch Center would irretrievably commit building materials and energy to the construction and maintenance of buildings and infrastructure proposed. Renewable, nonrenewable, and limited resources that would likely be consumed as part of

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development would include oil, gasoline, lumber, sand and gravel, asphalt, water, steel, and other similar materials. Many of these materials would be consumed during development activities, and therefore cannot be reused or recycled. It is possible that some building materials could be recycled or salvaged, such as glass and aluminum.