

California State University
Stanislaus
*Physical Master Plan
Update*

Program
Environmental Impact Report

*State Clearing House No. 2005012035
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California State University - Stanislaus

Physical Master Plan Update
Public Review Draft

Program Environmental Impact Report

State Clearing House No. 2005012035

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Preface

Introduction

This Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) has been prepared to satisfy the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the *California State University –Stanislaus Physical Master Plan Update*. The *Physical Master Plan Update* is also referred to as the “project” within this document. The PEIR conforms to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act of 1972 (CEQA), as amended, the State CEQA Guidelines, and the administrative procedures established by the State college and University system for the preparation and processing of EIR's. CEQA regulations are contained in Public Resources Code Section 21000 et. seq. and the CEQA Guidelines as contained in California Administrative Code Section 15000 et. seq. In accordance with Sections 15050 and 15367 of the State CEQA Guidelines, California State University (CSU) is designated as the lead agency for this project.

An EIR is an informational document to provide the general public and appropriate governmental agency decision-makers with a full understanding of the potential environmental effects of a proposed project. The EIR process is intended to enable public agencies to:

- evaluate a project for determination of the significance of its effects on the environment,
- to examine and institute methods of reducing and/or eliminating the severity of adverse impacts, and
- to consider alternatives to the project as proposed.

CEQA requires that major consideration be given to preventing environmental damage. At the same time, it is recognized that public agencies have obligations to balance other public objectives, including economic and social factors, in determining whether and how a project should be approved.

CEQA requires that all State and local government agencies consider the environmental consequences of their project decisions. The *CEQA Guidelines* defines "significant effect on the environment" as: "a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance" (*Guidelines* Section 15382).

The PEIR is intended to provide decision-makers and the public with information concerning the potential environmental effects of a project. It is also the means by which possible ways to reduce or avoid environmental damage can be evaluated. The PEIR must also disclose significant environmental impacts that cannot be avoided, potential cumulative impacts and environmental consequences that are not deemed to be significant.

This EIR is a Program EIR (PEIR) and has been prepared for the California State University (CSU). Pursuant to California Education Code Section 66606. The CSU

Board of Trustees is the governing body and owner of the CSU Stanislaus campus and has the authority to adopt the Update to the Physical Master Plan. CSU Stanislaus, and its administrative staff, will act as the local implementing agency for the CEQA process.

As noted above, this PEIR has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as amended. It has also been prepared in accordance with CSU CEQA Guidelines. Although the PEIR does not control the ultimate decision on the project, the CSU Board of Trustees must consider the information in the PEIR and respond to each significant effect identified in the PEIR. As defined in the CEQA Guidelines, a "significant effect on the environment" is:

“... a substantial or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment. A social or economic change related to a physical change may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant.”

California State University CEQA Procedures

CEQA requires that the Trustees of the California State University adopt their own regulations, including objectives and procedures for the evaluation of projects and for the preparation of environmental documents. The Trustees’ regulations must be consistent with CEQA and comply with guidelines adopted by the State Office of Planning and Research. These regulations are contained in the State University Administrative Manual (SUAM) as it applies to Capital Planning, Design and Construction.

Section III of SUAM addresses CSU CEQA procedures. Section 9171.01 of Section III states the Trustee’s objectives of the CSU CEQA procedures as the following:

The objectives of these CSU CEQA Procedures are to ensure that:

1. Environmental concerns are taken into account as early as feasible and continued throughout the planning and development process, to enable environmental considerations to influence a project’s program, design, and execution.
2. Objective evaluations are made as soon as possible to determine whether or not an action is a project and appropriate CEQA action is prepared in a timely manner.
3. Required CEQA actions are in full compliance with CEQA.
4. If the appropriate CEQA action is an environmental impact report (EIR), it is prepared in a timely manner that will provide detailed information on any significant environmental consequences. The EIR also shall examine any feasible mitigation measures or alternatives to eliminate or avoid probable adverse environmental impacts that might result from a proposed project.
5. The Trustees are given the opportunity to consider the project objectives, consequences, and alternatives available and decide whether the project should proceed, be revised, or be abandoned.

6. Review periods are set for various CEQA actions consistent with legal requirements.

The preparation of the Program EIR is consistent with Chapter 9176 of Section III. This chapter states that

“It is the policy of the Trustees that each campus shall have a comprehensive Program EIR for the Physical Master Plan. The Master Plan Program EIR will evaluate the cumulative impacts, growth-inducing impacts, and irreversible significant effects on the environment of subsequent campus projects to the greatest extent possible. The Program EIR will facilitate environmental review of subsequent projects on each campus. The Campus Facility and Planning Office (of each campus) will use the Program EIR to:

- 1. Make a finding that because the project is within the scope of the Physical Master Plan Program EIR, no new environmental analysis is necessary.*
- 2. Tier the review of a project for which the Physical Master Plan Program EIR does not fully address or fails to address the proposed action.*

Section 9177 – Findings of Consistency, Section III, states that

“Where a finding can be made by the Campus Facility and Planning Office that a proposed project or action and the environmental effects associated with that project or action were fully and comprehensively addressed in the Master Plan Program EIR, the Campus Facility and Planning Office can adopt Findings of Consistency, and no further CEQA action shall be required. Such Findings shall clearly identify and document how the project or action has been addressed in prior CEQA documents. The Findings shall be filed with the State Office of Planning and Research as an attachment to the Notice of Determination filed for the project. The Findings of Consistency shall be maintained in a project file available for public inspection.”

Section 9172 – Trustees’ Authority to Approve or Disapprove a Project, states the following:

“The Trustees may decide not to approve a project if the project will have one or more significant effects on the environment. The Trustees also have authority to approve a project even though the project would cause a significant effect on the environment, if the Trustees make a fully informed and publicly disclosed decision that:

1. There is no feasible way to lessen or avoid the significant effect, particularly in relation to project needs. For each unavoidable significant effect identified in an EIR, the Trustees must make one

of three findings as provided in Section 9180.06 (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091).

- a. Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project, which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effects identified in the Final EIR. These Findings shall be supported by substantial evidence in the record.
 - b. Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and not the agency making the Finding. Such changes have been adopted by such other agency, or can and should be adopted by such other agency. The agency must be specifically identified.
 - c. Specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations make infeasible the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in the Final EIR.
2. The identified benefits from the project outweigh and override the significant adverse environmental impacts of the project. To approve a project with unavoidable significant impacts, the Trustees must issue a 'statement of overriding considerations' as provided in Section 9180.07 (corresponding to CEQA Guidelines Section 15093).

Methodology of the EIR

This EIR addresses the potential effects of adopting a Physical Master Plan Update for CSU Stanislaus campus.

An EIR prepared for a university campus master plan is considered to be a "program EIR" since all the specific impacts of the various individual projects are not known at this time. A program EIR is therefore more general in nature and focuses on the overall impacts associated with the specific policies and goals proposed or projects that are anticipated to occur or are likely to occur as part of or as a result of master plan implementation. As individual development proposals are considered by the University, additional environmental analyses will be completed as determined necessary pursuant to Section 15162 of the CEQA Guidelines. It is expected that subsequent EIRs and Initial Studies prepared for projects proposed in accordance with the Physical Master Plan Update will utilize this document as a primary source of data and that the overall environmental determinations contained in this document will be applied to future decisions made with respect to the implementation of the Physical Master Plan Update.

The nature of potentially significant impacts associated with the master plan process as they will affect the campus and surrounding community has determined the scope of environmental issues incorporated into the discussion appearing in subsequent chapters.

Key aspects of the environment are addressed in this document in conformance with the requirement of the CEQA Guidelines that:

“The EIR shall focus on the significant effects on the environment. The significant effects should be discussed with emphasis in proportion to their severity and probability of occurrence. (Section 15143)”

The Guidelines further prescribe that:

“The degree of specificity required in an EIR will correspond to the degree of specificity involved in the underlying activity which is described in the EIR. (Section 15146).”

The determination to prepare a PEIR on the Physical Master Plan Update was based upon the findings of a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to potentially affected agencies and other interested parties. The Notice of Preparation and comments received in response to the NOP are included in this document as *Appendix A*.

Program EIR Organization

This environmental document has been prepared in accordance with the CEQA Guidelines and State law. The document has been organized in such a manner as to present environmental data in a logical manner for the convenience of the reader.

For this reason, discussions regarding:

- Setting Descriptions,
- Significant Environmental Effects of the Proposed Project,
- Unavoidable Significant Environmental Effects and
- Mitigation Measures Proposed to Minimize Significant Effects,

have been included under each environmental topic heading in Chapter 3, *Environmental Analysis*. This Chapter also contains discussion regarding “*Thresholds of Significance*” relative to various potential adverse environmental impacts.

Chapter 4 addresses **Significant Unavoidable Effects Which Cannot Be Avoided if the Project is Implemented**. Chapter 5 addresses **Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes Which Would be Involved With the Project Should it Be Implemented**. Chapter 6 includes a discussion of the **Growth-Inducing Impacts of the Proposed Project**. Chapter 7 contains a discussion on **the Mitigation Measures Proposed to Minimize the Significant Effects** of the project. Chapter 8 addresses various **Project Alternatives** to the proposed project. Chapter 9 contains a discussion of the **Cumulative Impacts** of the project. Chapter 10 includes the Program EIR’s **Mitigation Monitoring & Reporting Program** and Chapter 11 lists **Organizations and Individuals Contacted and References** during the preparation of the PEIR

“Draft” and “Final” Program EIR Documents

Under the California Environmental Quality Act, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is a two-part document. This “Draft” PEIR is prepared following the “Notice of Preparation” and “Early Consultation” phases of the process. This “Draft PEIR” is then circulated for public review and comment.

The “Final PEIR” contains comments made during the public review process along with any changes in the document and/or “responses” made to comments received.

The end product is a document that contains data and analysis on a project, and conclusions regarding potential environmental consequences of project approval. It also contains public comments and responses to those public comments regarding the PEIR’s data and analysis. This information is used by decision-makers while they deliberate their options regarding the “project”, in this case, the ***Physical Master Plan Update***.

This document has been modified to reflect public comments and input and republished in its entirety as a “Final PEIR”. This results in a somewhat more bulky “Final” document. It will, however, provide subsequent readers with more comprehensive background documentation and analysis for subsequent reference.

Revisions to the Physical Master Plan Update

The Physical Master Plan Update, like the Draft PEIR, is subject to public review and comment. When comments in the Plan result in changes, the PEIR needs to respond to those changes. The proposed changes to the Plan will be contained and discussed in the Final EIR with respect to their implications regarding this PEIR.