

9. Significant Irreversible Changes Due to the Proposed Project

Section 15126.2(c) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) describe any significant irreversible environmental changes that would be caused by the proposed project should it be implemented. Specifically, the CEQA Guidelines states:

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 highways 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. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified.

Generally, a project would result in significant irreversible environmental changes if:

- The primary and secondary impacts would generally commit future generations to similar uses;
- The project would involve a large commitment of nonrenewable resources;
- The project would involve uses in which irreversible damage could result from any potential environmental accidents associated with the project; or
- The proposed irretrievable commitments of nonrenewable resources are not justified (e.g., the project involves the wasteful use of energy).

In the case of the proposed La Puerta School Site Specific Plan (Specific Plan), its implementation would involve development to support residential development in the Project Area. Significant irreversible changes that would be caused by implementation of the Specific Plan would be:

- Construction activities that would entail the commitment of nonrenewable and/or slowly renewable energy resources; human resources; and natural resources such as lumber and other forest products, sand and gravel, asphalt, steel, copper, lead, other metals, water, and fossil fuels.
- Operation that would require the use of natural gas and electricity, petroleum-based fuels, fossil fuels, and water. The commitment of resources required for the construction and operation of the Specific Plan would limit the availability of such resources for future generations or for other uses during the life of the project.

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- An increased commitment of social services and public maintenance services (e.g., police, fire, sewer, and water services) would also be required. The energy and social service commitments would be long-term obligations in view of the low likelihood of returning the land to its original condition once it has been developed.
- Residential growth related to implementation of the Specific Plan would increase vehicle trips over the long term. Emissions associated with such vehicle trips would continue to contribute to the South Coast Air Basin's nonattainment designations for ozone, and particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) under the California and National Ambient Air Quality Standards (AAQS), and nonattainment for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) under the California AAQS.
- The visual character of the vacant Project Area would be altered by development and activities that would be accommodated by the Specific Plan. This would result in a permanent change in the character of the Plan Area and on- and off-site views in the vicinity of the Project Area.
- Long-term irreversible commitment of vacant land in the City of Claremont to urban uses.

Given the low likelihood that the Project Area would revert to lower intensity uses or to its current form, implementation of the Specific Plan would generally commit future generations to these environmental changes. However, the Project Area had previously been developed; therefore, the use of existing infrastructure is possible, and environmental impacts can be minimized. Additional development intensities can be more readily accommodated with minimal physical impact, relieving development pressure from other areas of the city where more intensive use of nonrenewable resources would be necessary. The commitment of resources to support development accommodated by the Specific Plan is not unusual for or inconsistent with projects of this type and scope. However, once these commitments are made, it is improbable that the Project Area would revert back to its current condition. Thus, implementation of the Specific Plan would result in significant irreversible changes to the environment throughout the lifespan of the development that would be accommodated by the Specific Plan.