

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

On April 27, 2007 the City of Chico (City) distributed to public agencies and the general public a draft environmental impact report (DEIR) for the Bidwell Park Master Management Plan Update (BPMMP) and four Park Improvement Projects (Trails Plan, Horseshoe Lake Area Concept Plan, Cedar Grove Area Concept Plan, Disc Golf/Trailhead Area Concept Plan). The BPMMP is a policy document that will guide management of Bidwell Park over the next decade and beyond. It includes extensive information on the resources present in the Park, and the policy framework (objectives and implementing strategies and guidelines) for Park management. The four Park Improvement Projects all include site specific improvements to enhance recreational experiences, minimize resource damage, and improve infrastructure and circulation.

The DEIR evaluates how environmental conditions would be expected to change as a result of implementation of the BPMMP and the four Park Improvement Projects. The EIR addresses both the impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed management policies and construction of proposed new facilities to support continuation of existing (baseline) Park use, related recreational uses of the site, and a cumulative evaluation of the project's contribution to other projects' environmental impacts. The California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines (State CEQA Guidelines), Section 15025(d), requires a 45-day review period for the DEIR. An extended 60-day review period for the project began on April 27, 2007 and ended on June 26, 2007, 2005. Public, state, and local agencies, organizations and user groups, and individuals commented on issues evaluated in the DEIR. During the review period, written comments were received from seven agencies, seven organizations, and 27 individuals, for a total of 41 comment letters. In addition, a public hearing was held in the City of Chico Council Chambers on June 13, 2007 during which oral comments were received on the DEIR from eight commenters. Written comment letters and restatements of comments provided during oral testimony at the public hearings are included in their entirety and summarized above the responses in Chapter 3, "Response to Comments."

In some instances, responses to comments warrant modification of the text of the draft DEIR. These changes are mentioned in the respective responses they correspond to and shown in detail in Chapter 4, "Errata." Information to be deleted is shown in ~~strikeout~~ and additions are shown in underline. Text changes resulting from comments and their accompanying responses have been incorporated into the original DEIR text. None of these text changes introduce significant new information that would result in the identification of a new impact.

Documents are available for review at the City of Chico Planning Services Department, 2nd floor 411 Main Street, Chico, California.

1.2 ORGANIZATION OF FINAL EIR

Chapter 2, "List of Commenters," contains a listing of the commenters who provided comments on the DEIR and identifies the topic of each comment provided. Chapter 3, "Response to Comments," provides master responses to issues raised by multiple commenters (see Section 1.4 below). Section 3.2, "Comments and Responses on the DEIR," contains all written and oral comments received on the DEIR and presents responses to significant environmental issues raised in the comments as required in State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15132. All comment letters and comments by speakers at the public hearing are labeled to correspond with an index table (Table 2-1) in Chapter 2. Each individual comment is assigned a letter (A for agencies, O for organizations, and I for Individuals) and a number (e.g., A1-1) that corresponds with the response following the comment. Chapter 4, "Errata," details all changes and edits to the DEIR that were made as a result of comments submitted on the DEIR. Chapter 5, "Report Preparers," presents the preparers of this document.

1.3 COMMENTS THAT DO NOT RAISE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

As specified in Section 15088(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the focus of the responses to comments shall be on the disposition of significant environmental issues. Responses are not required on comments regarding the merits of the project. Several of the comments express opinions about the merits of some aspect of the project. Comments on the merits of the project are being forwarded to the City Council decision makers for consideration before taking an action on the project. Where comments on the merits of the project are raised, the phrase “the comment is acknowledged” is used when the EIR authors wish to acknowledge a comment that does not directly pertain to the environmental issues analyzed in the EIR, does not ask a question about the EIR, or does not challenge information in or conclusions of the EIR. The intent is simply to recognize the comment.

1.4 MASTER RESPONSES TO COMMENTS

The City prepared master responses to respond to environmental issues that were raised multiple times by multiple commenters. The master responses are generally more extensive than individual responses provided in Chapter 3 and may cover several related issues raised by a variety of commenters. The master responses include comments related to the programmatic nature of the EIR, Disc Golf project development and mitigation measures, Cultural Resource/Humboldt Road, impacts to oak woodlands and Aesthetics. The master responses are provided in Section 3.1 of this document.

1.5 RECIRCULATION IS NOT REQUIRED

Some commenters expressed an opinion that the DEIR requires recirculation because it inadequately evaluates the environmental impacts of the project. According to the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5, lead agencies are required to recirculate information in an EIR when significant new information is added to the EIR after public notice is given of the availability of the DEIR for review. New information added to an EIR is not significant unless the changes deprive the public of a meaningful opportunity to comment on a substantial adverse environmental effect of the project or feasible way to mitigate or avoid such an effect that the project proponent has declined to implement. Significant new information requiring recirculation can include changes to the project or environmental setting, a new significant environmental impact that would result from the project or from a new mitigation measure proposed to be implemented, or a substantial increase in the severity of a significant impact identified in the DEIR, unless mitigation measures are adopted to reduce the effect to less than significant. Substantial changes to the project or environmental setting have not occurred and no new significant environmental impacts or substantial increases in the severity of an identified significant impact have been identified. Therefore, the City has determined that recirculation of the DEIR for public review is not needed.