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Introduction and Summary

1.1 Introduction

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) addresses the environmental effects associated with the implementation of a General Plan Amendment (48403-GA) and Zone Change (48405-ZC) for a portion of the City of Irvine's Sphere of Influence. The Sphere of Influence is defined as the area outside the City's corporate boundaries which may logically become part of the City through an annexation process. The proposed project would amend the City's General Plan and Zoning Code for a portion of the Sphere of Influence to permit development of a mix of residential, industrial, commercial, recreational, institutional uses and open space dedications in preparation for annexation. The portion of the City's Sphere of Influence that is the subject of this DEIR is referred to throughout this document as the Northern Sphere Area. The Northern Sphere Area (also referred to as "Project Area" or "Project Site") consists of Planning Areas ("PA") 3, 6, and 9, and a portion of Planning Areas 5 and 8 as delineated in the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. The development authorized by this General Plan Amendment and Zone Change will trigger the dedication of open space to the City of Irvine in Planning Area 2 (Implementation District "P"), and 6 (Implementation District "Q" and "R"). Planning Area 2 is outside the Northern Sphere Area (yet within the City's Sphere of Influence) directly west of the Project Site. The open space portion of Planning Area 2 is referred to as Implementation District "P." At this time, no General Plan Amendment, Zone Change, or Annexation is proposed for Implementation District "P," and therefore Implementation District "P" is included in the project for open space dedication purposes only. Planning Area 3 consists entirely of open space previously offered for dedication, and is included as part of the proposed project so that General Plan and Zoning designations consistent with the open space dedication may be assigned in preparation for annexation.

This DEIR has been prepared as a Program EIR. A Program EIR addresses the scope of a series of actions and approvals which may be considered as one large project, and are related either geographically or as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions. This Program EIR will be used to evaluate development of the Project Area in accordance with the proposed General Plan and Zoning designations for the site. As a Program EIR, this document will also be used to address the environmental effects of subsequent discretionary approvals for the Northern Sphere Area, such as annexation of the Northern Sphere Area to the City and a Pre-Annexation Development Agreement(s) between the City and The Irvine Company. This Program EIR may also be used for City approvals that will be required to implement the project, such as subdivision maps (tentative

tract and parcel maps), as well as permits and approvals required of responsible agencies for project implementation and development, such as the County of Orange, Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG).

This DEIR has been prepared pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the City of Irvine's CEQA procedures. The City of Irvine Community Development Department, as the lead agency, has reviewed and revised as necessary all submitted drafts, technical studies, and reports to reflect its own independent judgement, including reliance on applicable City technical personnel from other departments and independent third-party review of all technical subconsultant reports.

The City of Irvine Community Development Department prepared an Initial Study and distributed a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for 30-day review on May 2, 2001 to the State Clearinghouse, responsible agencies, and interested parties. This DEIR is focused upon those impacts considered potentially significant in the Initial Study, as augmented by comments received in response to the NOP and comments received by the City at a scoping hearing for the proposed project. Each impact identified in the Initial Study is addressed in detail in Section 4.0 of this document. The Initial Study and NOP are included as Appendix A and all comments received on the NOP are included as Appendix B. A summary of the comments received in response to the NOP is provided at Section 2.4.2.

Data for this DEIR was obtained from on-site field observations, discussions with affected agencies, analysis of adopted plans and policies, review of available studies, reports, data and similar literature, and specialized environmental assessments (visual impact, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, paleontological resources, geotechnical, environmental site assessments, hydrology, water quality, noise, population/housing, and transportation/traffic).

1.2 Environmental Procedures

This DEIR has been prepared pursuant to CEQA to assess the environmental effects associated with implementation of the proposed project, including the current applications for General Plan Amendment and Zone Change, as well as anticipated future discretionary actions and approvals. The six main objectives of this document as established by CEQA are listed below:

- To disclose to decision-makers and the public the significant environmental effects of proposed activities.
- To identify ways to avoid or reduce environmental damage.
- To prevent environmental damage by requiring implementation of feasible alternatives or mitigation measures.

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- To disclose to the public reasons for agency approval of projects with significant environmental effects.
 - To foster interagency coordination in the review of projects.
 - To enhance public participation in the planning process.

An Environmental Impact Report (“EIR”) is the most comprehensive form of environmental documentation identified in CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines and provides the information needed to assess the environmental consequences of a proposed project, to the extent feasible. EIRs are intended to provide an objective, factually supported, full disclosure analysis of the environmental consequences associated with a proposed project that has the potential to result in significant, adverse environmental impacts.

An EIR is also one of various decision-making tools used by a lead agency to consider the merits and disadvantages of a project that is subject to its discretionary authority. Prior to approving a proposed project, the lead agency must consider the information contained in the EIR, determine whether the EIR was properly prepared in accordance with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, determine that it reflects the independent judgment of the lead agency, and adopt findings concerning the project’s significant environmental impacts and alternatives, and must adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations if the proposed project would result in significant impacts that cannot be avoided.

1.2.1 EIR ORGANIZATION

The following outlines the organization of this DEIR:

- Section 1.0 provides an introduction and summary of the proposed project, including a description of the project’s location and characteristics, and identifies significant impacts; proposed mitigation measures; areas of known controversy, including issues raised by public agencies and the public; unresolved issues; and development alternatives.
- Section 2.0 provides a description of the proposed project, including its location and boundaries, the objectives sought to be attained by the proposed project, and a general description of the project’s characteristics.
- Section 3.0 provides a summary of the existing environmental setting which provides a baseline for assessing environmental impacts.
- Section 4.0 describes the affected environment, and analyzes each of the environmental resource areas evaluated. For each environmental impact issue analyzed, the DEIR includes a detailed explanation of the existing conditions, thresholds of significance that will be

applied to determine whether the project's impacts are significant or less than significant, analysis of the environmental impacts, and a determination of whether the project has a significant impact. A "significant impact" or "significant effect" means "a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project." (14 Cal. Code of Reg. §15382.)

In determining whether an impact is "significant," within CEQA's definition, the DEIR has identified thresholds of significance found in CEQA, the CEQA Guidelines, and standards of general application that may be found in adopted plans and programs, such as the City's General Plan. An effort has been made to avoid overly subjective significance criteria which are not based in specific CEQA policies or guidelines and/or generally accepted standards upon which significance can be determined. For those impacts determined to be significant, the analysis identifies existing regulations, standard conditions, project design features/special development requirements, and/or mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate any significant environmental impacts associated with the project.

Section 4.0 also includes within each environmental impact analyzed a discussion of the cumulative effects of the project when considered in combination with other projects causing related impacts as required by Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines.

- Section 5.0 describes the significant unavoidable adverse impacts of the proposed project.
- Section 6.0 discusses the alternatives to the proposed project.
- Sections 7.0, 8.0, and 9.0 address the significant environmental changes of the project, growth-inducing impacts, and impacts found not to be significant, respectively.
- Section 10.0 provides a summary of the mitigation monitoring program.
- Section 11.0 includes a list of the organizations and persons consulted in preparation of the EIR.
- Section 12.0 provides the qualifications of the persons preparing the EIR, and Section 13.0 lists the documents referenced in the EIR.

1.2.2 MEASURES THAT AVOID OR MINIMIZE SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

Section 15126.4 of the CEQA Guidelines requires the identification and consideration of feasible measures which could minimize significant adverse impacts. The CEQA Guidelines require the discussion of mitigation measures to distinguish between the measures which are proposed by individual project applicants to be included in the project and other measures proposed by the lead, responsible or trustee agencies and which are not included in the project, but which the lead agency determines could reasonably be expected to reduce adverse impacts if required as conditions of approving the project.

The mitigation measures listed in Table 1-1 and included in Section 4.0 are divided into three types: 1) Existing Regulations and Standard Conditions; 2) Project Design Features/Special Development Requirements; and, 3) Additional Mitigation Measures. Existing Regulations and Standard Conditions refer to those existing federal, state, county, and city codes, regulations and standard conditions with which the project must comply, and which through compliance, potentially significant impacts are either reduced or avoided. Existing Regulations encompass such legal requirements as the Uniform Building Code, the adopted Natural Community Conservation Plan, and existing municipal stormwater permits. Standard Conditions are those standard conditions of approval which have been adopted by the City of Irvine and are applied to all projects within the City. Although compliance with existing laws and regulations is not considered mitigation, the Existing Regulations and Standard Conditions applicable to the project are identified in this section.

Project Design Features/Special Development Requirements are those measures which have been identified and incorporated into the project by individual project applicants and that avoid or reduce impacts. In some instances, Project Design Features (PDFs) may be applied to improve or provide a beneficial impact to the environmental issue analyzed even where no significant impact has been identified. Because these features have been made a part of the project, they do not constitute mitigation measures by definition, although they have a mitigating effect. In the City of Irvine, PDFs will be implemented as Special Development Requirements, and their implementation will be assured through inclusion in the mitigation monitoring and reporting program.

Where an impact cannot be avoided or reduced to a level of less than significant through adherence to Existing Regulations and Standard Conditions, or implementation of Project Design Features/Special Development Requirements, the DEIR identifies Additional Mitigation Measures which, if implemented, would help avoid or minimize significant impacts of the project. These measures are specific, feasible actions that will either avoid or reduce significant impacts of the proposed project.

1.2.3 TYPE AND PURPOSE OF THIS EIR

As described in greater detail in Section 2.0, the Northern Sphere Area Project proposes the ultimate development of 12,350 dwelling units; 575,000 square feet of multi-use facilities; 175,000 square feet of Community Commercial facilities; 51 acres of Commercial Recreational uses; 6,566,000 square feet of Medical and Science facilities, 13 acres of Institutional facilities, 1,060 acres of Recreation, a minimum of four elementary/middle schools, and the dedication of 4,615 acres of open space. Implementation of the Northern Sphere Area Project requires a number of discretionary permits and approvals. Currently, the City is considering applications for a General Plan Amendment and Zone Change for that portion of the Northern Sphere Area that is the subject of this DEIR. Future applications and approvals include a Pre-Annexation Development Agreement(s) between the City of Irvine and The Irvine Company, and annexation of the Northern Sphere Area to the City. Future approvals would also include subdivision maps, building and grading permits, and other discretionary permits and approvals required to develop and implement the proposed project over its estimated 20 year build-out time period. These permits and approvals include those actions by the City as well as responsible agencies, such as the County, Caltrans, LAFCO, and CDFG. Given the multiple phase nature of this project, and the permitting, planning and development actions which are related both geographically and as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions to implement this project, this document has been prepared as a Program EIR, pursuant to Section 15168 of the CEQA Guidelines.

A Program EIR examines the total scope of environmental effects that would occur as a result of buildout of the entire proposed project. By examining the full scope of the proposed project and subsequent applications and approvals at this early stage of planning, the Program EIR will provide a full disclosure of the environmental impacts that may occur throughout the Project Site, together with an analysis of the site specific and cumulative environmental impacts that will occur throughout the buildout time frame of this project. The advantages of preparing a Program EIR for this project are that it:

1. Enables a more comprehensive consideration of environmental impacts and alternatives than would be practical in multiple EIRs or alternative environmental documentation prepared for each major development phase.
2. Ensures consideration of cumulative impacts that could otherwise be understated in a phase by phase analysis.
3. Avoids duplication and reconsideration of basic policy considerations as each subsequent development project is submitted for City approval.
4. Allows the City of Irvine to consider broad policy and project alternatives and program-wide mitigation measures at an early stage of planning, when there is greater flexibility to deal with basic problems or cumulative impacts.

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5. Allows for a reduction in paperwork.

1.2.4 SUBSEQUENT ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This Program EIR is intended to provide the environmental clearance for subsequent applications, including annexation, that are submitted to obtain City and responsible agency approvals for discretionary actions required for site-specific development projects within the Northern Sphere Area. If determined necessary, an initial study will be prepared by the agency required to take the discretionary action for each future development application within the Northern Sphere Area to determine if a Subsequent or Supplemental EIR or other environmental documentation is necessary to comply with the CEQA. Sections 15162-15164 of the CEQA Guidelines state the conditions that are necessary for the preparation of a Subsequent or Supplemental EIR, or Addendum as follows:

15162

- (a) *When an EIR has been certified or a negative declaration adopted for a project, no subsequent EIR shall be prepared for that project unless the lead agency determines, on the basis of substantial evidence in the light of the whole record, one or more of the following:*
- (1) *Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;*
 - (2) *Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or*
 - (3) *New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified as complete or the negative declaration was adopted, shows any of the following:*
 - (A) *The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR or negative declaration;*
 - (B) *Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;*

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- (C) *Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible, and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative.*

15163

- (a) *The lead or responsible agency may choose to prepare a supplement to an EIR rather than a subsequent EIR if:*
- (1) *Any of the conditions described in Section 15162 would require the preparation of a subsequent EIR, and*
 - (2) *Only minor additions or changes would be necessary to make the previous EIR adequately apply to the project in the changed situation.*

15164

- (a) *The lead agency or a responsible agency shall prepare an addendum to a previously certified EIR if some changes or additions are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent EIR have occurred.*

In addition, Section 15168 of the CEQA Guidelines describes when a Program EIR can be used for later activities, as described below:

15168

- (c) *Use with Later Activities. Subsequent activities in the program must be examined in the light of the Program EIR to determine whether an additional environmental document must be prepared.*
- (1) *If a later activity would have effects that were not examined in the Program EIR, a new initial study would need to be prepared leading to either an EIR or a negative declaration.*
 - (2) *If the agency finds that pursuant to Section 15162, no new effects could occur or no new mitigation measures would be required, the agency can approve the activity as being within the scope of the project covered by the Program EIR, and no new environmental document would be required.*
 - (3) *An agency shall incorporate feasible mitigation measures and alternatives developed in the Program EIR into subsequent actions in the program.*

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- (4) *Where the subsequent activities involve site specific operations, the agency should use a written checklist or similar device to document the evaluation of the site and the activity to determine whether the environmental effects of the operation were covered in the Program EIR.*
- (5) *A Program EIR will be most helpful in dealing with subsequent activities if it deals with the effects of the program as specifically and comprehensively as possible. With a good and detailed analysis of the program, many subsequent activities could be found to be within the scope of the project described in the Program EIR, and no further environmental documents would be required.*

If a Subsequent or Supplemental EIR is required, those documents can incorporate relevant information from this Program EIR by reference, and limit its focus to the particular characteristics and effects of the individual project. If, on the other hand, the City or responsible agency finds that the future project is consistent with the project described in this EIR, would have no new significant environmental effects not analyzed in this EIR, and would not require any new mitigation measures, it may approve the future project(s) without preparing additional environmental documentation. The City or other responsible agency will, however, in its future discretionary actions, continue to apply the Existing Regulations and Standard Conditions, Project Design Features/Special Development Requirements, and Additional Mitigation Measures identified in the Final Program EIR for this project and adopted by the City.

When public notice is required for a future discretionary approval, permit or development application that is consistent with this Program EIR and does not require subsequent environmental documentation, that notice will include a statement that a) the project is within the scope of this Program EIR, and, b) this Program EIR adequately describes and analyzes the environmental effects of that project for the purposes of CEQA.

1.3 Project Location

The 7,743-acre Project Site is located in the central portion of Orange County, immediately north and east of the City of Irvine, within the City's Sphere of Influence. More specifically, the Project Site is generally bounded by Trabuco Road to the south and MCAS El Toro to the south and east, Jeffrey Road and existing residential development to the west, and the Santiago Hills to the north. The Foothill (SR-241) Transportation Corridor traverses the northern portion of the site. Local access is provided via the surrounding roadway system including the Santa Ana (I-5) Freeway, the Eastern (SR-133) Transportation Corridor, and the Foothill (SR-241) Transportation Corridor. Surrounding land uses include the permanent open space to the north, and the residential

communities of Northwood (Planning Area 8) and Northwood Point (Planning Area 5) to the west. Planning Area 40/Spectrum 8 (formerly a portion of Planning Area 9) and the former El Toro MCAS are located south of the site. The community of Foothill Ranch is also located east of the Project Site. The Northern Sphere Area includes Planning Areas 3, 6 and 9, and a portion of Planning Areas 5 and 8, as delineated in the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Although not a part of the Northern Sphere Area, the proposed project also includes dedication of approximately 748 acres in Planning Area 2 that are outside of the Northern Sphere Area, but are being dedicated to comply with the provisions of the Protocol Agreement (as discussed in Section 2.3.1), Irvine Zoning Code Chapter 2-21, the NCCP Implementation Agreement and NCCP Facilitation Agreement. The dedication of this area, referred to as "Implementation District P," is included as part of the Northern Sphere Area Project solely because dedication is required with development of Planning Area 9 in the Northern Sphere Area. The General Plan Amendment and Zone Change does not affect Implementation District "P," nor is this area proposed for annexation at this time. (The location of Implementation District "P" is shown in Section 2.3 on Exhibit 2-9.)

1.4 Project Summary

The proposed project includes a General Plan Amendment (48403-GA) and Zone Change (48405-ZC), annexation of the Project Area to the City, and its ultimate development with a maximum of 12,350 dwelling units; 575,000 square feet of multi-use facilities; 175,000 square feet of Community Commercial facilities; 51 acres of Commercial Recreational uses; 6,566,000 square feet of Medical and Science facilities, 13 acres of Institutional facilities, 330 acres of Recreation, and a minimum of four elementary/middle schools. The Northern Sphere Area also includes approximately 3,867 acres of open space (consisting of Implementation Districts "Q" and "R" in PA 6, and Implementation Districts "C" through "F" in PA 3). The project also proposes dedication of 748 acres in Implementation District "P" which are located outside of the Northern Sphere Area, but will be dedicated as part of the Northern Sphere Area project in accordance with the requirements of the Protocol Agreement between the City and The Irvine Company, Irvine Zoning Code Chapter 2-21, the NCCP Implementation Agreement and NCCP Facilitation Agreement. Unlike the other dedication areas that are within the Northern Sphere Area, the 748 acres of Implementation District "P" is not proposed for annexation to the City at this time and no governmental discretionary actions, such as the General Plan Amendment or Zone Change, are being proposed for Implementation District "P."

The major components and discretionary actions to be considered by the City based upon applications currently pending before the City are as follows:

- General Plan Amendment (48403-GA) which will:
 - 1) Amend Table A-1 "Maximum Intensity Standards by Planning Area" in the Land Use Element of the General Plan to transfer 12,087 dwelling units from the NCCP/HCP density bank and approved but unbuilt units from existing

planning areas (Planning Areas 2, 5A, 8, 11, 12, and 15) to the Northern Sphere Area.

- 2) Revise the Land Use Element and Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan to change the existing General Plan land use designations for the 7,743 acres within the Project Area from its current designations which include Agriculture, Estate-Density Residential (0-1 dwelling units per gross acre), Preservation, Recreation, Water Body and Educational Facility to designations which will include Medium Density Residential, Research and Industrial, Community Commercial, Multi-Use, Preservation, and Recreation. A statistical breakdown of the existing and proposed General Plan land use designations are set forth in Section 2.
 - 3) Amend the Circulation Element to reduce Jeffrey Road north of Portola Parkway from a 6-lane to a 4-lane arterial and to delete an unnamed, continuous north-south roadway located between Irvine Boulevard and Trabuco Road within Planning Area 9 to achieve consistency with the County's Master Plan of Arterial Highways (MPAH).
 - 4) Amend related elements of the General Plan as required to maintain internal consistency.
 - 5) Amend Objective L-10 and associated policies contained in the City's Conservation and Open Space Element to reflect the deletion of areas designated for permanent agriculture, while retaining provisions relating to the maintenance of agriculture as an interim use.
 - 6) In addition to the foregoing, the City has agreed to consider amending the Circulation Element to establish LOS "E" as the acceptable level of service for specific intersections within the existing Irvine Spectrum and Medical and Science zoned areas within the Project Area. If the City authorizes such an amendment, the change will be integrated into General Plan Amendment 48403-GA.
- Zone Change (48405-ZC) to provide zoning consistent with the General Plan Amendment within the Project Area. Proposed zoning classifications for the Project Area include: 1.4 Preservation; 1.5 Recreation; 1.6 Water Bodies; 2.3/2.3H/2.3I/2.3J Medium Density Residential; 3.1 Multi-Use; 4.2 Community Commercial; 4.4. Commercial Recreation; 5.5 Medical and Science; and 6.1 Institutional.
 - Dedication of Implementation District "P" (consisting of 748 acres outside of the Northern Sphere Area) to the City pursuant to the requirements of the Protocol

Agreement, Irvine Zoning Code Chapter 2-21, the NCCP Implementation Agreement and NCCP Facilitation Agreement.

Future discretionary actions to be considered by the City to implement the proposed project include:

- Annexation of the Northern Sphere Area to the City.
- Pre-Annexation Development Agreement(s) between the City and the applicants
- Master Plan(s) and Subdivision Maps (e.g., tentative tract or parcel maps) for the subsequent development of each Planning Area.
- Issuance of grading, building and other related permits.
- Other discretionary permits and approvals as may be required from the City or other responsible agencies for the construction and development within the Northern Sphere Area.

In addition, project implementation will require permits and approvals from other local, state and federal agencies. A list of other discretionary approvals required for the project is set forth in Section 2.3.3. Finally, this Program EIR will be used to evaluate development of the Project Area in accordance with the proposed General Plan and Zoning designations for the site.

1.5 Environmental Impacts

Based upon the Initial Study and Environmental Checklist Form, the City of Irvine staff determined that an EIR should be prepared for the proposed project. The scope of the DEIR was determined based upon the City's Initial Study, comments received in response to the NOP, and comments received at the scoping hearing conducted by the City. Pursuant to Sections 15126.2 and 15126.4 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the EIR should identify any potentially significant adverse impacts and recommend mitigation that would reduce or eliminate these impacts to levels of insignificance.

The information contained in the Project Description forms the basis for analyzing project-related environmental impacts. When the impact analysis requires a degree of forecasting due to the project buildout time period, the environmental impact analysis, since no impacts will occur there, has assumed the "worst-case" potential. Further environmental review by the City may be required when more detailed information, plans, and designs become available.

This DEIR has been prepared to evaluate potentially significant impacts associated with the proposed project, and how this project may cumulatively interact with other development projects in the surrounding area. Existing Regulations and Standard Conditions, Project Design Features/Special Development Requirements, and Additional Mitigation Measures have been proposed to either reduce or eliminate potentially significant impacts. For purposes of environmental analysis in this DEIR, the focus of the environmental impact analysis is on those areas in which physical changes to the existing environment are proposed that may result in environmental impacts, i.e., development and improvement activities authorized through approval of the proposed General Plan Amendment, Zone Change and annexation. Because no physical changes to the existing environment are proposed to occur in either Planning Area 3 or Implementation District "P," this DEIR will describe those areas in the environmental setting, as appropriate, but will not discuss those areas as part of the environmental impact analysis. In addition, the DEIR describes a range of reasonable alternatives to the project which could feasibly attain the basic objectives of the project, while substantially avoiding or lessening any of the significant impacts of the proposed project, and evaluates the comparative merits of the alternatives and the proposed project.

1.5.1 IMPACTS CONSIDERED LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT

This DEIR is considered a "full-scope" DEIR in which all environmental impact categories identified in the City's Initial Study and Environmental Checklist Form are discussed in detail in this document. However, as discussed in Section 9.0, several specific environmental effects were found not to be significant and therefore are not discussed in detail in this document. Please refer to Section 9.0 for a complete discussion of the individual environmental effects which were found to be less than significant.

1.5.2 POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACTS

Fifteen environmental factors have been identified as potentially significant impacts if the proposed project is implemented. These factors are:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology/Soils
- Hazards & Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Land Use/Planning
- Noise
- Population/Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic
- Utilities/Service Systems

1.5.3 UNAVOIDABLE SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACTS

This DEIR identifies four unavoidable adverse impacts, as defined by CEQA, that would result from implementation of the proposed project. Unavoidable adverse impacts may be considered significant on a project-specific basis, cumulatively significant, and/or potentially significant. Potentially significant impacts are those that fall within the responsibility of another agency and implementation of the mitigation measures cannot be assured by the City of Irvine. If the City of Irvine, as the Lead Agency, determines that unavoidable significant adverse impacts will result from the project, the City must prepare a "Statement of Overriding Considerations" before it can approve the project. A Statement of Overriding Considerations states that the decision-making body has balanced the benefits of the proposed project against its unavoidable significant environmental effects and has determined that the benefits of the project outweigh the adverse effects and, therefore, the adverse effects are considered to be acceptable. The impacts that were found in the DEIR to be significant and unavoidable are:

Unavoidable Project-related Impacts

- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality

Unavoidable Cumulative Adverse Impacts

- Air Quality

Potentially Unavoidable Significant Adverse Impacts that are within the Responsibility of Another Agency

The following impact has been identified as potentially significant since changes or alterations required to mitigate the impact are within the responsibility of and jurisdiction of another public agency (Caltrans) and not the agency making the finding (City of Irvine), and implementation of the changes or alterations cannot be fully assured by the City of Irvine at this time. (CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15091(a)(2).)

- Project Traffic Impacts on Freeway Ramps

1.6 Incorporation by Reference

Per Section 15150 of the State CEQA Guidelines, an EIR may incorporate by reference all or portions of another document which is a matter of public record or is generally available to the public. Ten previously prepared EIRs which are either generally related to the proposed project or located in the general vicinity of the proposed project were relied upon in the preparation of this DEIR. These documents consist of:

1. GPA 16 Final EIR;
2. Final Master EIR for the City of Irvine Comprehensive General Plan Update - Phase 2 (15032-GA) and Zoning Ordinance Update - VI (15864-ZC); State Clearinghouse (SCH) Number 93111034;
3. Final EIR for the Revised City of Irvine Planning Areas 51, 35, and 30 Annexation, General Plan Amendment, and Zoning Change (39399-GA and 39400-ZC); SCH Number 98111078;
4. Final Environmental Impact Report No. 573 for the Civilian Reuse of MCAS El Toro and the Airport System Master Plan for John Wayne Airport and Proposed Orange County International Airport; SCH Number 98101053;
5. Final EIR/EIS for the County of Orange Central/Coastal NCCP/HCP (Final Program EIR No. 553); SCH Number 93071061;
6. Final EIR for Planning Area 40/Spectrum 8 General Plan Amendment (43221-GA), Zone Change (4322-ZC), Development Agreement, and Annexation; SCH Number 98111078;
7. Final EIR for Planning Area 27 Zone Change (27368-ZC) and Master Plan for Hillside (27370-MPH); SCH Number 97071007;
8. Final EIR for Planning Area 17 General Plan Amendment (41020-GA), Zone Change (41021-ZC), and Master Plan (41022-MP); SCH Number 2000021051;
9. Final EIR (TCA EIR 3) for the Foothill Transportation Corridor-Oso Parkway to I-5; SCH Number 89010252; and
10. Final EIR (TCA EIR 2) for the Eastern Transportation Corridor; SCH Number 89010410.

A summary of these documents is included in Appendix C to the DEIR.

This DEIR also relies upon previously adopted regional and statewide plans and programs, agency standards, and background studies in its analysis, such as the City's General Plan, the Air Quality Management Plan, the CEQA Air Quality Handbook, and the Central/Coastal NCCP/HCP. Whenever existing environmental documentation or previously-prepared documents and studies are used in the preparation of this DEIR, the information is summarized for the convenience of the reader and incorporated by reference. In addition, each section which relies upon previously adopted plans, programs, environmental documentation, and background studies notes how it specifically relates to the proposed project and that the information has been reconfirmed. These documents and other referenced source material in this DEIR will be made available to the public for inspection at the City upon request.

1.7 Areas of Controversy

Prior to preparation of the DEIR, a public scoping meeting was held to determine the concerns of the surrounding community regarding the proposed project. Issues raised during the scoping meeting and in comments to the NOP generally fall into the following three categories:

1. Compatibility of the potential and proposed land uses with reuse of the former El Toro MCAS (i.e., the Millennium Plan II, the Great Park Plan, and the Orange County International Airport);
2. The potential for increased traffic volumes through existing neighborhoods, including the compatibility of the proposed major access points with existing residences; and,
3. Compatibility of the proposed land use designations with existing land uses, including the location of Research and Industrial uses, proposed residential densities, location of residential land use vis-a-vis agricultural uses expected to continue during and after construction of the proposed project and the possibility of alternative land use plans incorporating "smart growth" (i.e., traditional neighborhood) designs.

Other issues involve the environmental effects related to agricultural resources, air quality (increased vehicle trips), noise (impacts to existing neighborhoods due to increased traffic), stormwater quality, and the project's interface with the open space dedication areas to the north. These and other environmental issues are fully addressed in Section 4.0 of this document. No other areas of controversy are known to the lead agency.

1.8 Issues to be Resolved

Section 15123(b)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR contain issues to be resolved including the choice among alternatives and whether or how to mitigate significant impacts. With regard to the proposed project, the major issues to be resolved include decisions by the Lead Agency as to the following:

1. Whether this DEIR adequately describes the environmental impacts of the project.
2. Whether the benefits of the project override those environmental impacts which cannot be feasibly avoided or mitigated to a level of insignificance.
3. Whether the size and scope of the proposed project is compatible with the character of the surrounding area.
4. Whether the identified Existing Regulations and Standard Conditions, Project Design Features/Special Development Requirements and Additional Mitigation Measures should be adopted or modified.
5. Whether there are other mitigation measures that should be applied to the project besides the Additional Mitigation Measures identified in the DEIR.
6. Whether there are any alternatives to the project that would substantially lessen any of the significant impacts of the proposed project and achieve most of the basic project objectives.

1.9 Summary of Development Alternatives

CEQA states that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must address “a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which could feasibly attain the basic objectives of the project, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives.” (14 Cal. Code of Reg. §15126.6(a).) As described in Section 6.0 of this DEIR, a total of six project alternatives were identified during the scoping process and analyzed for relative impacts as compared to the proposed project including:

1. No-Project/No Development Alternative
2. No-Project/Existing General Plan Alternative
3. No Industrial/Increased Residential Alternative
4. Reduced Density Alternative
5. Increased Residential Intensity Alternative
6. Reduced Density and Development Area Alternative

The following presents a summary of each of the alternatives analyzed in the DEIR. Please refer to Section 6.0 for a complete discussion of how the alternatives were selected and the relative impacts associated with each alternative.

1.9.1 NO-PROJECT/NO DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVE

The No-Project/No Development Alternative, as required by CEQA, assumes that the existing zoning designations for the project site would remain unchanged. The current City of Irvine zoning for the Northern Sphere Area is 1.1 Exclusive Agriculture, 1.2 Development Reserve, 1.3 Conservation Open Space Reserve, and 1.7 Landfill Overlay. Therefore, development cannot occur in the Northern Sphere Area without a zone change, with the exception of permitted and conditional uses identified in the City of Irvine Zoning Code. Agriculture is one such use. As a result, this alternative assumes all existing uses within the Northern Sphere Area would remain in their current location and no additional development would occur. However, development of 12,350 residential units that are being transferred to the Northern Sphere Area could still be developed elsewhere in the City.

1.9.2 NO-PROJECT/EXISTING GENERAL PLAN ALTERNATIVE

This alternative, which is also required by CEQA, assumes that the existing County of Orange General Plan and Zoning designations for the project site would remain unchanged and no annexation of the project area to the City of Irvine would occur. The current County of Orange General Plan (which would continue to govern land use if the project is not annexed to the City) designates the majority of the Northern Sphere Area, including all of Planning Areas 3, 5B, 8A, and 9 and portions of Planning Areas 2 and 6 as (5) Open Space. Approximately 850 acres located outside the Nature Reserve of Orange County established by the NCCP/HCP and within Planning Area 6 are designated (1B) Suburban Residential Communities which allows for residential development between .5 and 18 dwelling units per acre. The No-Project/Existing General Plan Alternative, therefore, assumes that approximately 7,650 dwelling units (9 dwelling units per acre) could be developed within Planning Area 6. All other existing agricultural uses within the Northern Sphere Area would remain in their current location and no additional development would occur. However, under this alternative, 12,350 residential dwelling units could still be developed in other Planning Areas of the City and the City's Sphere of Influence pursuant to the existing General Plan from which the development potential for the proposed project was to be transferred.

1.9.3 NO INDUSTRIAL/INCREASED RESIDENTIAL ALTERNATIVE

The No Industrial/Increased Residential Alternative would convert the proposed industrial land uses into residential land uses. Assuming the same housing density as that of the proposed project, this alternative would result in the development of 2,650 additional dwelling units for a total of 15,500 dwelling units, 575,000 sq. ft. of Multi-Use, and 175,000 sq. ft. of Community Commercial.

1.9.4 REDUCED DENSITY ALTERNATIVE

This alternative would reduce overall intensity within the project by 30 percent. This would reduce the number of residential units from 12,350 to 8,645, reduce the square footage of Multi-Use facilities from 575,000 sq. ft. to 402,500 sq. ft., reduce the square footage of Community Commercial from 175,000 sq. ft. to 122,500 sq. ft., and reduce the square footage of Medical and Science from 6,566,000 sq. ft. to 4,596,200 sq. ft. Development boundaries would remain the same. Other components of the project, including the number of elementary/middle schools proposed as part of the project, and acreage of community and neighborhood parks would be reduced to reflect the approximately 30% reduction in residential development density.

1.9.5 INCREASED RESIDENTIAL DENSITY ALTERNATIVE

The Increased Residential Intensity Alternative would include 15,500 Residential units, 575,000 sq. ft. of Multi-Use development, 175,000 sq. ft. of Community Commercial uses, and 6,566,000 sq. ft. of Medical and Science facilities. This alternative would increase residential development by 3,150 units, although the proposed land use designations and boundaries would remain unchanged. However, increased residential development could require increases in parkland dedication and increase school demands.

1.9.6 REDUCED DENSITY AND DEVELOPMENT AREA ALTERNATIVE

This alternative would reduce the development area by retaining agricultural zoning on an approximately 376 acre area in Planning Area 9. This area of prime and unique farmland is located north of Irvine Boulevard and south of Portola Parkway between Sand Canyon and Jeffrey Road. In addition to a reduction in the development area, this alternative also reduces the number of residential units from 12,350 to 11,031, reduces the square footage of Multi-Use facilities from 575,000 sq. ft. to 225,000 sq. ft., and reduces the square footage of Medical and Science from 6,566,000 sq. ft. to 4,000,000 sq. ft. No reduction in Community Commercial uses would occur under this alternative. Other components of the project, including the number of elementary/middle schools proposed as part of the project and acreage of community and neighborhood parks, would be reduced to reflect the approximately 10% reduction in residential development density. As this alternative would keep portions of the Project Area adjacent to Jeffrey Road in agricultural uses, dedication and implementation of the Jeffrey Open Space Spine would not occur between Irvine Boulevard and Portola Parkway.

1.10 Summary

A summary of the environmental analysis and proposed Existing Regulations and Standard Conditions, Project Design Features/Special Development Requirements, and Additional Mitigation Measures to reduce potential impacts of the proposed project is included in the following table, Table 1-1.

Insert Table 1-1