

## Chapter 3.0

# Project Description

Consistent with Section 15168 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, this Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) provides a programmatic analysis of the potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the goals, policies, actions, and projected buildout of the City of Irvine (City) 2045 General Plan Update (project). As described in Section 15168 of the CEQA Guidelines, program-level environmental review documents are appropriate when a project consists of a series of actions related to the issuance of rules, regulations, and other planning criteria. The project, which is the subject of this PEIR, is pursued by the City to provide long-term policy direction and to guide future development. In addition to providing long-term policy direction, the City is required to update the appropriate elements of the General Plan to accommodate the residential site inventory from the 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element Update effective 2021 to 2029 (2021-2029 Housing Element) (adopted in May 2022) and to ensure consistency with state law guiding the contents of required General Plan elements.

In accordance with timeframes established by state law, the City previously prepared and adopted the 2021-2029 Housing Element. The 2021-2029 Housing Element identified and analyzed the City's existing and projected housing needs and presents a detailed outline and work program of the City's goals, policies, quantified objectives, and programs for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing for a sustainable future. The 2021-2029 Housing Element identifies ways in which the housing needs of all economic segments of the community, including residents and the local workforce, can be met. The overall goal of the 2021-2029 Housing Element is to provide safe and decent housing for all socioeconomic segments of the community. The overall goal of the 2021-2029 Housing Element is to provide safe and decent housing for all socioeconomic segments of the community.

As a general plan update, the project area would be citywide. The City itself is located within the coastal foothill region of central Orange County in the state of California. Located approximately two miles inland from the Pacific Ocean and 40 miles south of the city of Los Angeles, the City is bordered by unincorporated Orange County and a number of cities including Tustin, Santa Ana, Lake Forest, Costa Mesa, Newport Beach, Orange, Laguna Woods, and Laguna Hills. Figure 2-1 presents the regional location of the City.

## 3.1 Project Background and History

California state law requires each city and county to adopt a general plan for its physical development. A general plan is a key tool that addresses a variety of subject areas and expresses the community's development goals related to future land uses in the jurisdiction.

Incorporated in 1971, the City of Irvine adopted the first General Plan in December 1973. The City's General Plan was last comprehensively updated in 2000 and has been updated over the years to address necessary General Plan amendments. Since 2000, the City has continued to grow, as the

community has matured and evolved. In 2000, the City still had a significant amount of "greenfield" (vacant land utilized as farmland in the interim or generally undeveloped land) that was available for development. Now, there is limited greenfield land available, and such, the project seeks to address opportunities for infill and redevelopment. The purpose of the project is to provide long-term policy direction; provide a blueprint guiding future development in the City; and communicate the vision, values, and goals for the City's physical development and overall quality of life.

The 2021-2029 Housing Element Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation for the City is 23,610 units. To ensure consistency with housing statute, including no-net loss and affirmatively furthering fair housing requirements, the 2021-2029 Housing Element identified adequate sites to accommodate 57,656 new residential units. To implement the Housing Element, the project would adopt a residential and residential mixed-use overlay zone that would allow greater flexibility for property owners and developers proposing residential development projects with affordable housing units in areas currently zoned for nonresidential uses.

The existing General Plan includes both the mandated elements of the State Government Code Section 65302 as they apply to the local conditions, and optional elements designed to address high priority topics of City interest. The General Plan is kept up to date with current issues, trends, and community needs through periodic amendments. When an amendment occurs, special attention is given to make sure that all components work in harmony and the plan maintains its internal consistency as required by state law.

The City's existing General Plan contains seven elements required by the State Planning, Zoning and Development Laws. Conservation and Open Space have been combined into a single element. There are also eight optional elements relating to the development of the City. They are as follows:

- Mandated Elements
  - Land Use
  - Circulation
  - Housing
  - Conservation and Open Space
  - Noise
  - Safety
- Optional Elements
  - Public Facilities and Services
  - Integrated Waste Management
  - Energy
  - Parks and Recreation
  - Cultural Resources
  - Growth Management
  - Seismic
  - Irvine Business Complex

The project would update the City's existing General Plan elements to reflect consistency with the adopted Housing Element and state law governing the contents within general plans. As part of the project, existing optional elements under the adopted General Plan will be incorporated into the mandated elements under the General Plan update and the City will be adding the Environmental Protection and Climate Action Element. Following project approval, the City's General Plan will include the following:

- **Mandated Elements**
  - **Land Use**  
Incorporates information from existing Growth Management and Irvine Business Complex Elements
  - **Circulation**
  - **Housing**
  - **Conservation and Open Space**  
Incorporates information from existing Parks and Recreation, Public Facilities and Services, and Cultural Resources Elements
  - **Noise**
  - **Safety** (includes information from Seismic Safety Element)
- **Optional Elements**
  - **Environmental Protection and Climate Action Element**  
Incorporates information from existing Energy, Public Facilities and Services, and Integrated Waste Management Elements

## 3.2 Project Objectives

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15124(b), the following primary objectives support the purpose of the project, assist the Lead Agency in developing a reasonable range of alternatives to be evaluated in this report, and ultimately aid decision-makers in preparing findings and overriding considerations, if necessary. The project objectives are as follows:

1. Implement land use changes necessary to implement the City's 2021-2029 Housing Element.
2. Identify areas of opportunity and provide options to enhance development in key focus areas of the City while maintaining the City's signature master plan concept.
3. Implement citywide policy direction to support a high quality-of-life for residents, businesses, and visitors into the future, including a focus on health and wellness.
4. Identify additional sites for residential and/or residential mixed-use development throughout the City using overlay zones to allow greater flexibility for property owners and developers.
5. Implement Phase 2 of the Great Park Framework Plan to serve residents and visitors in the City.
6. Extend Ada roadway between the Irvine Train Station and Marine Way to better support residential uses and improve multi-modal connectivity.

## 3.3 Project Description

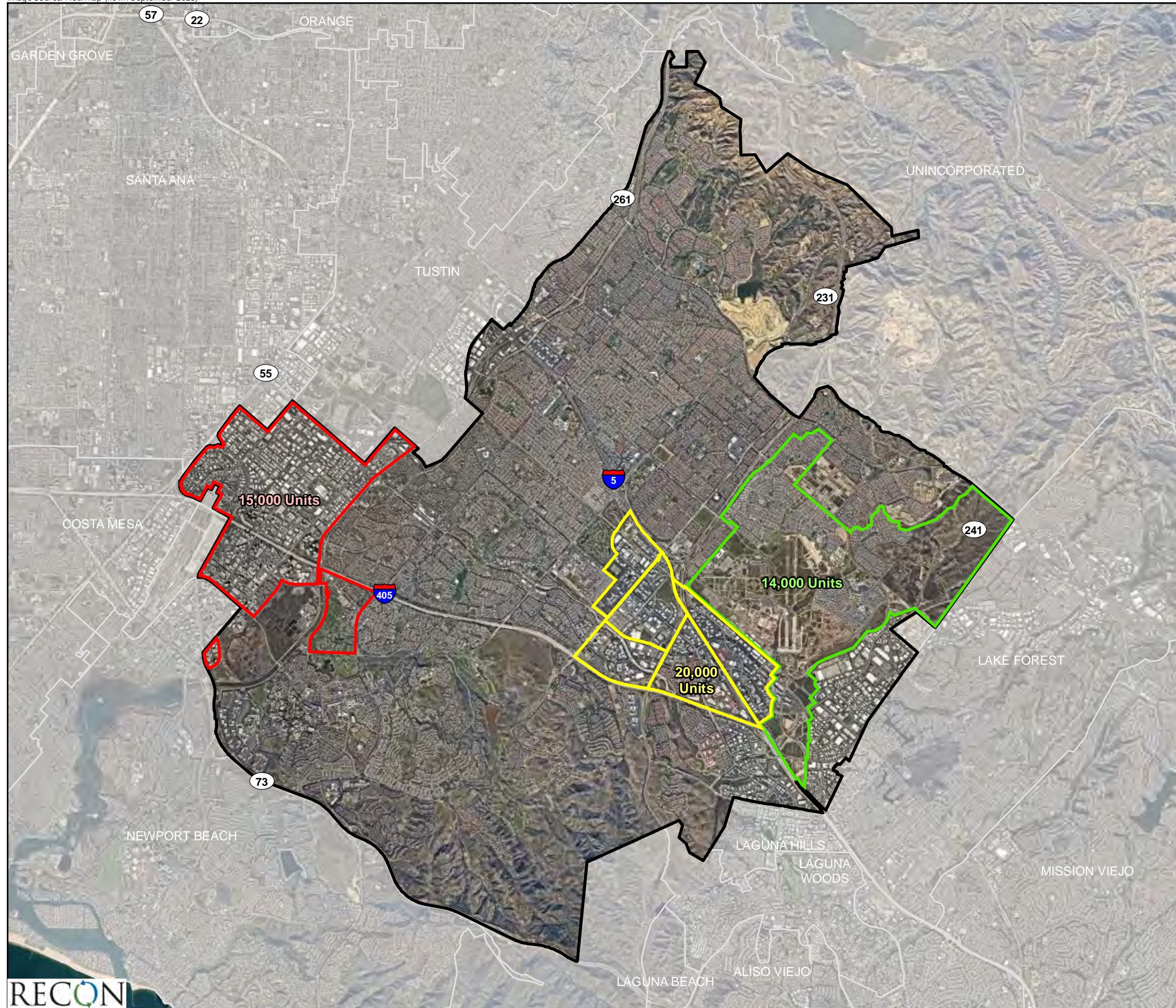
The project would update the General Plan Land Use Element to support the City's RHNA allocation of 23,610 units. Table 3-1 provides a breakdown of the City's RHNA allocation by income category. As previously stated, the 2021-2029 Housing Element identified adequate sites to accommodate 57,656 new residential units to ensure consistency with housing statute, including no-net loss and





affirmatively furthering fair housing requirements. The 57,656 new residential units consist of 55,395 new dwelling units and 2,261 unbuilt units already in the General Plan.

Income Category	Total Units
Extremely Low/Very Low Income (0–50 percent Area Median Income (AMI))	6,396
Low Income (51–80 percent AMI)	4,235
Moderate Income (80–120 percent AMI)	4,308
Above Moderate Income (Above 120 percent AMI)	8,671
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23,610</b>

The project would accommodate the City's RHNA requirement and implement the 2021-2029 Housing Element through the introduction of additional residential and/or residential mixed-use development throughout the City using overlay zones that would allow greater flexibility for property owners and developers proposing to develop affordable housing projects. The overlays would promote higher density residential and mixed-use in three focus areas that are most suited for new growth and development as they are located near existing job centers and are along major travel corridors with access to existing and future public transit opportunities. Figure 3-1 presents the boundaries of the three focus areas. Descriptions of the three focus areas are presented below:

- Focus Area 1 would consist of the Greater Irvine Business Complex Area. This focus area includes Planning Area 36 (Irvine Business Complex) and Planning Area 19 (Rancho San Joaquin). Land use changes within Focus Area 1 include expanding a residential and/or mixed-use overlay to the entire Irvine Business Complex (IBC) and the specific sites identified in the 2021-2029 Housing Element site inventory located in Rancho San Joaquin. Over the past 20 years, the IBC has transitioned from predominantly nonresidential uses to a mixed-use area that is currently governed by the 2010 IBC Vision Plan. Under the existing General Plan, the IBC is allowed a maximum of 15,000 base units. The IBC continues to be one of the two employment centers located within the City and remains an opportunity area for high density residential development. The IBC is connected to the Tustin Transportation Center (Metrolink and Orange County Transportation Authority [OCTA]) transit service) through the iShuttle and has direct access to Interstate 405, State Route 73, and State Route 55. The project proposes to increase the total number of residential permitted in the Greater IBC area by an additional 15,000 units.



-  Irvine City Boundary
-  Focus Area 1 - PA 36 and 19
-  Focus Area 2 - PA 12, 13, 31, 32, and 33
-  Focus Area 3 - PA 51

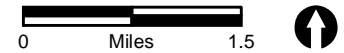


FIGURE 3-1  
2045 General Plan Update Focus Areas

- Focus Area 2 would consist of the Greater Spectrum Area. This focus area includes Planning Area 13 (Irvine Spectrum 4), Planning Area 31 (Irvine Spectrum 6), Planning Area 32 (Irvine Spectrum 3), Planning Area 33 (Irvine Spectrum Center), and a portion of Planning Area 12 (Oak Creek). The Greater Spectrum Area incorporates three nonresidential Planning Areas (13, 31, and 32) that are located adjacent to the Irvine Spectrum Center area, emerging employment centers, and the Irvine Transportation Center (Metrolink, Amtrak, and OCTA transit service). With the introduction of a residential overlay, this area could transition to a network of micro-villages or residential nodes, connected by a variety of multi-modal and complete street strategies that provide new opportunities for residents and businesses in Irvine. The project would increase the residential intensity in Focus Area 2 by an additional 26,607 residential units.
- Focus Area 3 would consist of the Great Park Neighborhood Transit Village. This focus area would include Planning Area 51 (Great Park Neighborhood), which is an existing mixed-use area that features a mix of residential products at varying densities surrounding the Irvine Great Park. While the Great Park area has undergone significant development in recent years, a significant amount of Planning Area 51 remains vacant with no additional residential intensity. The project would increase the number of residential units permitted in the Great Park with a focus on higher density residential uses located near or adjacent to the Irvine Transportation Center. The Great Park Neighborhood Transit Village area would have direct access to Focus Area 2 (Greater Spectrum Area) through a network of proposed multi-modal improvements. The project would increase the residential intensity in Planning Area 51 with an additional 5,252 residential units.

The project would accommodate the remaining 8,536 residential units required by the City's RHNA assessment outside of the focus areas throughout the City. The remaining 8,536 residential units would be permitted throughout the City by increasing the number of dwelling units permitted to be developed in these areas both in the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Projects proposed outside of the three focus areas would be entitled using the City's existing development standards and entitlement procedures.

New development proposed under the project would be developed to be consistent with the Land Use Element, which encouraged a proximity village approach, building upon the City's current approach to master planning in the City. Utilizing a proximity village approach to planning would ensure that future development is balanced with a mix of uses including neighborhood-serving nonresidential square footage (retail, restaurants, medical offices, etc.) and parks and open space uses that are connected through multi-modal transportation and complete street strategies. Table 3-2 presents the distribution of proposed residential units within various Planning Areas throughout the City under the project, as well as the distribution of proposed residential units within various Planning Areas throughout the City under the Reduced Project Alternative, which is discussed in detail in Section 7.2.2 of this PEIR.

In addition to the RHNA residential component, the project includes additional nonresidential land uses in the Irvine Great Park (Great Park). Phase 1 of the Great Park Framework Plan is in the baseline (no build condition) and the remaining land uses supporting the buildout of the Great Park Framework (200 acres in total) are included as part of the project. Phase 2 (or the remaining buildout

of the Great Park) includes the following: a botanical garden, a veteran’s memorial garden, a library, a discovery center, two museums, a 65-acre central park area, an accessory restaurant use, an aquatic center, an all-wheel park, and pickleball courts.

The project also includes the extension of the Ada roadway from its current terminus in the parking lot of the Irvine train station south of the Southern California Railroad Authority (SCRRA) railroad tracks to extend north under the railroad tracks to meet the future Marine Way extension north of the railroad tracks. The Ada roadway extension between the Irvine train station and Marine Way provides multi-modal connectivity to support the residential uses.

Table 3-2 Proposed Housing Units		
Focus Area	Project Dwelling Units	Reduced Project Alternative Dwelling Units
<b>Focus Area 1</b>		
PA 19 (Rancho San Joaquin)	2,202	2,111
PA 36 (Irvine Business Complex)	12,798	9,131
<b>Total Focus Area 1</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>11,242</b>
<b>Focus Area 2</b>		
PA 12 (Oak Creek)	4,907	3,670
PA 13 (Irvine Spectrum 4) <sup>1</sup>	0	0
PA 31 (Irvine Spectrum 6)	2,934	256
PA 32 (Irvine Spectrum 3)	17,817	14,936
PA 33 (Irvine Spectrum Center)	949	949
<b>Total Focus Area 2</b>	<b>26,607</b>	<b>19,811</b>
<b>Focus Area 3</b>		
PA 51 (Great Park)	5,252	5,252
<b>Total Focus Area 3</b>	<b>5,252</b>	<b>5,252</b>
<b>Non-Focus Areas</b>		
PA 4 (Lower Peters Canyon)	357	293
PA 6 (Portola Springs)	400	284
PA 8 (Northwood)	899	464
PA 15 (Woodbridge)	2	2
PA 20 (University Park)	152	119
PA 24 (University Town Center)	823	555
PA 34 (Irvine Spectrum 5)	85	0
PA 35 (Irvine Spectrum 2)	5,239	1,562
PA 39 (Los Olivos)	298	298
PA 40 (Cypress Village)	281	498
<b>Non-Focus Areas Total</b>	<b>8,536</b>	<b>4,073</b>
<b>Total (Focus Areas and Non-Focus Areas)</b>	<b>55,395</b>	<b>40,378</b>
Unbuilt Units in General Plan (IRWD Site and Market Place Site)	2,261	2,261
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>57,656</b>	<b>42,639</b>
PA = Planning Area		
<sup>1</sup> Overlay applies to PA 13. However, no units are contemplated as part of the project.		

### 3.3.1 Residential and Residential Mixed-Use Overlay

The project does not include any changes to existing General Plan land use designations or zoning classifications. Rather, the project includes a Residential and Residential Mixed-Use Overlay that would encourage residential infill projects. To adopt the proposed overlays, the project includes a Zone Text Amendment to include a new section establishing a Residential and Residential Mixed-Use Overlay and to revise applicable portions of the City of Irvine Zoning Ordinance affected by the proposed overlay to resolve any potential zoning inconsistencies resulting from adoption of the overlay. A corresponding Zoning Map Amendment would be prepared to illustrate the proposed overlay area on the City's Zoning Map. The project specifically proposes to amend the City of Irvine Zoning Ordinance to reflect the following overlay strategies aimed at encouraging residential infill projects:

- **Focus Areas 1 through 3 – Residential and Residential Mixed-Use Overlay.** Residential projects proposed within the three focus areas may be permitted on nonresidential properties should they include a minimum density of 50 dwelling units per acre and comply with the City's adopted Inclusionary Housing requirements (15 percent affordability). Furthermore, residential projects proposed in Focus Area 1 - Greater IBC may also be permitted to exceed existing Development Intensity Values if they include a minimum density of 50 dwelling units per acre and provide at least 20 percent of the total units on site as affordable to lower-income households (9 percent for very low-income households, 6 percent for low-income households, and 5 percent for moderate-income households in the 81–100 percent area median income (AMI). Incentives will be identified in the overlay development standards for non-residential uses, such as, but not limited to retail, restaurants, office, and community facilities that are complimentary to the residential and residential mixed-use uses and encourage the development of a proximity village.

### 3.4 Intended Uses of the PEIR

This PEIR examines the potential environmental impacts of implementing the project and identifies mitigation measures required to address significant impacts, as necessary. This evaluation is programmatic and does not evaluate the potential project-specific environmental impacts of individual development proposals that may be allowed under the project after its adoption. Subsequent projects would be reviewed by the City for consistency with the project and this PEIR, and adequate project-level environmental review would be conducted as required under CEQA.

### 3.5 Discretionary Actions, Permits, and other Project Approvals

In accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15050 and 15367, the City is the designated Lead Agency for the project and as such, has principal authority and jurisdiction for the CEQA actions and project approval. Responsible agencies are agencies that have jurisdiction or some authority over one or more aspects of a project and/or identified mitigation measures. Trustee Agencies are State agencies that have jurisdiction over natural resources affected by a project.



Discretionary actions are those actions taken by an agency that call for the exercise of judgment in deciding whether to approve or how to carry out a project. The City, as the Lead Agency, has jurisdiction over the following legislative and discretionary actions for this project:

- Adopt a General Plan Amendment updating the General Plan elements, and City's Land Use Map.
- Approve a Zone Text Amendment to revise applicable sections of the City of Irvine Zoning Ordinance affected by the overlay program.
- Approve Zoning Map Amendment to illustrate the proposed overlay program.
- Certify the PEIR.
- Adopt the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.
- Adopt the Statement of Overriding Considerations.

Additional Responsible/Trustee Agencies include the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board (Santa Ana RWQCB), the California Coastal Commission, and the Airport Land Use Commission, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. SCAQMD works with the Lead Agencies to ensure that air quality, greenhouse gas, and health risk impacts from proposed projects are accurately evaluated and mitigated where feasible. The Santa Ana RWQCB is responsible for the protection, and where applicable, the enhancement of the quality of waters within the Santa Ana River Basin. The Santa Ana RWQCB also implements state and federal laws and regulations as they pertain to water quality. The California Coastal Commission is responsible for reviewing the Local Coastal Program that is required to be updated following project approval. The Airport Land Use Commission is responsible for reviewing the General Plan and making a consistency/inconsistency determination in relation to the Airport Environs Land Use Plan. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has jurisdiction over development in or affecting the navigable waters of the United States.