

# 1 INTRODUCTION

This draft environmental impact report (DEIR) evaluates the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Village at Squaw Valley Specific Plan (VSVSP) project (project). The project includes adoption of the specific plan itself and implementation of the associated development proposal.

This DEIR has been prepared under the direction of Placer County (County) in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000-21177) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR], Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Sections 15000-15387) (“CEQA Guidelines”). The County is the lead agency for consideration of this EIR and potential project approval.

Squaw Valley Real Estate, LLC (project applicant) is requesting approval of various discretionary entitlements in support of a mixed use development that includes resort residential, commercial, and recreation uses, as well as parking and other visitor amenities, and employee housing on approximately 94 acres within Squaw Valley (also known as Olympic Valley) in northeastern Placer County and within the Sierra Nevada. The Specific Plan area (plan area) is located west of State Route (SR) 89, approximately nine miles south of the Town of Truckee, and seven miles northwest of Tahoe City and Lake Tahoe, but outside of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The project includes up to 1,493 bedrooms associated with hotel and resort residential uses (condo hotel, timeshare, and fractional units) provided in up to 850 units, employee housing sufficient to accommodate up to 300 employees in a mix of dormitory and studio units, up to a maximum of approximately 297,733 square feet of commercial uses (this square footage includes hotel common areas and various “back of house” uses), a Village Core, restoration of Squaw Creek, forest recreation uses, conservation preserve uses, a Mountain Adventure Camp, and a transit center and parking facilities. The project will also involve extension of some infrastructure. The Specific Plan would be developed over an estimated 25-year buildout period, with some construction proposed to begin no earlier than spring of 2016.

The proposed Specific Plan is the first specific plan proposed under the *Squaw Valley General Plan and Land Use Ordinance* (SVGPLUO), which was adopted by Placer County in 1983. The Specific Plan would, if approved, amend the SVGPLUO to redesignate the project site as “Specific Plan” and comprehensively plan development of a recreation-based, all-season, mountain resort community. The proposed Specific Plan is designed to be consistent with the overall development intensity and the goals, objectives, and policies in the SVGPLUO, the Specific Plan is proposed to provide for a more coordinated and well integrated development, including rezoning some areas to more appropriately reflect site conditions and the proposed development mix.

## 1.1 TYPE AND PURPOSE OF THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

CEQA requires that public agencies consider the potentially significant adverse environmental effects of projects over which they have discretionary approval authority before taking action on those projects (PRC Section 21000 et seq.). CEQA also requires that each public agency avoid or mitigate to less-than-significant levels, wherever feasible, the significant adverse environmental effects of projects it approves or implements. If a project would result in significant and unavoidable environmental impacts (i.e., significant effects that cannot be feasibly mitigated to less-than-significant levels), the project can still be approved, but the lead agency’s decision-maker, in this case the Placer County Board of Supervisors, must prepare findings and issue a “statement of overriding considerations” explaining in writing the specific economic, social, or other considerations that they believe, based on substantial evidence, make those significant effects acceptable (PRC Section 21002; CCR Section 15093).

According to CCR Section 15064[f][1]), preparation of an EIR is required whenever a project may result in a significant adverse environmental impact. An EIR is an informational document used to inform public agency decision makers and the general public of the significant environmental effects of a project, identify possible ways to mitigate or avoid the significant effects, and describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project that could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project while substantially lessening or avoiding any of the significant environmental impacts. Public agencies are required to consider the information presented in the EIR when determining whether to approve a project.

In accordance with CCR Section 15168, this document is a program EIR. A program EIR is one type of EIR that can be prepared for planning projects, as well as a variety of other project types (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168). A program EIR enables a lead agency to examine the overall effects (direct, indirect and cumulative) of a proposed project or course of action and to consider broad policy alternatives and programwide mitigation measures at an early time in the decision-making process when the agency has greater flexibility. The subject of the agency's approval decision is the overall program addressed in the EIR. When subsequent activities in the program are proposed, the agency must determine whether the environmental effects of those activities were covered in the program EIR and whether additional environmental documents must be prepared. If a later activity would have effects that were not examined in the program EIR, a project-specific CEQA document must be prepared. The project-level CEQA documents may incorporate by reference general discussions from the broader EIR and focus on the impacts of the individual projects that implement the plan, program, or policy.

This EIR will evaluate the environmental effects of the Specific Plan at a program level. Prior to approval of entitlements to develop each phase of the Specific Plan, each phase will be reviewed to determine if it is within the scope of the program EIR, or if additional CEQA analysis is required.

## 1.2 SCOPE OF THE DEIR AND EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

Pursuant to CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, a lead agency shall focus an EIR's discussion on significant environmental effects and may limit discussion on other effects to brief explanations about why they are not significant (PRC Section 21002.1, CCR Section 15128). A determination of which impacts would be potentially significant was made for this project based on review of the information presented in the Initial Study prepared for the project (Appendix A) and comments received as part of the public scoping process (Appendices A and B), as well as additional research and analysis of relevant project data during preparation of this DEIR.

The County has determined that the project has the potential to result in significant environmental impacts on the following resources, which are addressed in detail in this DEIR:

- ▲ Air Quality;
- ▲ Biological Resources;
- ▲ Cultural Resources;
- ▲ Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change;
- ▲ Hazardous Materials and Hazards;
- ▲ Hydrology and Water Quality;
- ▲ Land Use and Forest Resources;
- ▲ Noise;
- ▲ Population, Employment, and Housing;
- ▲ Public Services and Utilities;
- ▲ Soils, Geology, and Seismicity;
- ▲ Transportation and Circulation; and
- ▲ Visual Resources

### 1.2.1 Effects Found Not to be Significant

CEQA allows a lead agency to limit the detail of discussion of the environmental effects that are not considered potentially significant (PRC Section 21100, CCR Sections 15126.2[a] and 15128). Effects dismissed in an Initial Study as clearly insignificant and unlikely to occur need not be discussed further in

the EIR unless the lead agency subsequently receives information inconsistent with the finding in the Initial Study (CCR Section 15143).

Based on a review of the information presented in the Initial Study prepared for the project (Appendix A) and comments received as part of the public scoping process (Appendices A and B) as well as additional research and analysis of relevant project data during preparation of this DEIR, the following were identified as resources that would not experience any potential environmental impacts from the project. Accordingly, these resources are not addressed further in this DEIR, but are identified below with a brief explanation as to why impacts to each resource are not anticipated, as required by CEQA.

## **AGRICULTURE**

The project would not be located on or adjacent to farmland or land associated with a Williamson Act contract; therefore, the project would not convert farmland to non-agricultural use nor would it conflict with zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, no impacts to agriculture would occur and this issue is not discussed further in this DEIR.

## **MINERAL RESOURCES**

The project would not be located within a mapped mineral resource zone. No loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state would occur. Further, there are no locally important mineral resource recovery sites delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan that include the project site. Therefore, no impacts to mineral resources would occur and this issue is not discussed further in this DEIR.

## **PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

Paleontological resources include mineralized, partially mineralized, or unmineralized bones and teeth, soft tissues, shells, wood, leaf impressions, footprints, burrows, and microscopic remains that are more than 5,000 years old and occur mainly in Pleistocene or older sedimentary rock units. There have been no recent discoveries of paleontological resources in the project vicinity and there is no evidence identifying any sensitivity for paleontological resources in the project area. Geologic and soil conditions in the region were created by geologic uplift resulting in deep granitic bedrock with typically shallow surface soils. The plan area is not underlain with sedimentary rock formations of a type that could contain fossils. In addition, past glacial movement in the area has resulted in significant movement and disturbance of rock and soil, further minimizing the potential for fossils to be present. Significant paleontological resources are not expected to occur in the project area and no impact to paleontological resources would occur. Therefore, this issue is not discussed further in this DEIR.

## **1.3 DEFINITION OF BASELINE**

The State CEQA Guidelines (CCR Section 15125[a]) state that:

An EIR must include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published, or if no notice of preparation is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced, from both a local and regional perspective. This environmental setting will normally constitute the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether an impact is significant.

As described below in Section 1.7, "Project Review and CEQA Process," the County issued a notice of preparation (NOP) for the project on October 10, 2012 and initiated the preparation of technical studies and the CEQA environmental review process. Subsequently, the project was revised by the applicant and a revised NOP was issued on February 21, 2014. Because the majority of project technical studies were

conducted beginning in 2012 and environmental conditions have not been substantially altered since then, the baseline conditions for this DEIR are generally the conditions that existed in the plan area in 2012. Some data are more recent, and this is noted in the discussion of relevant issues.

Chapters 4 through 16 present the existing environmental conditions on the project site and surrounding area as appropriate, in accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines (CCR Section 15125). This setting generally serves as the baseline against which environmental impacts are evaluated. The extent of the environmental setting area evaluated (the project study area) differs among resources, depending on the locations where impacts would be expected. For example, air quality impacts are assessed for the air basin (macroscale) as well as the site vicinity (microscale), whereas aesthetic impacts are assessed for the project site vicinity only.

## 1.4 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

The State CEQA Guidelines (CCR Section 15382) define a 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. 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.

Chapters 4 through 16 identify the thresholds of significance used to determine the level of significance of the environmental impacts for each resource topic, in accordance with CCR Sections 15126, 15126.2, and 15143. The topics upon which thresholds of significance were developed are based on the checklist presented in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines; Placer County's CEQA checklist; the *Placer County General Plan*; best available data; and regulatory standards of federal, state, and local agencies. The level of each impact is determined by comparing the effects of the project to the environmental setting and determining whether substantial, adverse changes would result. Key methods and assumptions used to frame and conduct the impact analysis are also described in Chapters 4 through 16 for each resource topic.

## 1.5 PROJECT BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

As noted above, the proposed Specific Plan is the first specific plan proposed under the SVGPLUO, which was adopted by the County in 1983. The proposed Specific Plan project would amend the permissible land uses previously approved for the plan area in the SVGPLUO.

The proposed Specific Plan was first submitted to Placer County in December 2011 and was revised in June 2013. That initial submittal and first revision covered a larger Village area (approximately 101.5 acres) and did not include the East Parcel, which is now proposed for employee housing, parking, shipping and receiving, and a retail market. The Specific Plan was revised again in January 2014 to include a smaller Village area (approximately 85 acres) and to include the East Parcel (approximately 9 acres), for a total of approximately 94 acres. In addition, policies, text and exhibits were revised to address public and County comments and concerns. The Specific Plan was further revised in October 2014; the Specific Plan had the same boundaries as the January 2014 Specific Plan, but included further revisions and refinements to exhibits, policies, and programs. The Specific Plan was most recently updated in April 2015 to include minor adjustments in response to the environmental review process.

Also see Sections 1.7.1 and 1.7.2, below, regarding the CEQA process completed to date for the project.

## 1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

This DEIR uses a variety of terms to describe the level of significance of adverse impacts identified during the course of the environmental analysis. These and other terms are defined below.

- ▲ A “less-than-significant impact” is an impact that is adverse but that is not substantial and does not exceed the defined thresholds of significance. Less-than-significant impacts do not require mitigation.
- ▲ A “significant impact” is an impact that exceeds the defined thresholds of significance and would or could cause a substantial adverse change in the environment. Mitigation measures are recommended to eliminate the impact or reduce it to a less-than-significant level.
- ▲ A “potentially significant impact” is an impact for which information may not be definitive, but where it is likely or reasonably foreseeable that a significant impact may result. A potentially significant impact is equivalent to a significant impact and requires the identification of feasible mitigation measures or alternatives.
- ▲ A “significant and unavoidable impact” is an impact that exceeds the defined thresholds of significance and that cannot be eliminated or reduced to a less-than-significant level through the implementation of mitigation measures.
- ▲ “SVGPLUO” refers to the 1983 *Squaw Valley General Plan and Land Use Ordinance*.
- ▲ “Specific Plan area” or “plan area” refers to the approximately 94-acre area that includes the main Village area (approximately 85 acres) and the East Parcel (approximately 8.8 acres).
- ▲ “Project site” refers to the combined plan area and the area upon which utility infrastructure, trails, and other activities outside the plan area boundary are to be located.
- ▲ “Proposed project” or “project” refers to the proposed Village at Squaw Valley Specific Plan project.

## 1.7 PROJECT REVIEW AND CEQA PROCESS

### 1.7.1 Notice of Preparation

In accordance with PRC Section 21092 and CCR Section 15082, the County issued an NOP on October 10, 2012 to inform agencies and the general public that an EIR was being prepared and to invite comments on the scope and content of the document (Appendix A). The NOP was submitted to the State Clearinghouse; posted on the County’s website (<http://www.placer.ca.gov/departments/communitydevelopment/envcoordsvcs/eir.aspx>); and was made available at the Tahoe City and Truckee libraries. In addition, the NOP was distributed directly to public agencies (including potential responsible and trustee agencies), interested parties, and organizations. The NOP was circulated for 30 days, through November 9, 2012.

In accordance with PRC Section 21083.9 and CCR Section 15082 (c), a noticed scoping meeting for the EIR occurred on November 1, 2012 at The Resort at Squaw Creek.

### 1.7.2 Revised Notice of Preparation

In response to public and agency comments received during the scoping process as well as changing market conditions and other factors, the project was subsequently revised by the applicant. Overall, project

development was reduced by approximately one-third after the October 2012 NOP was released. Also, additional information became available regarding several project components, including plans for employee housing. A separate Phase I Project component, part of the 2012 NOP, is no longer considered as part of the project or evaluated in the DEIR.

In response to these changes, the County prepared a revised NOP to allow additional public and agency comment on the scope and content of the EIR as it relates to project revisions. The revised NOP was issued on February 21, 2014 (Appendix B). The revised NOP was submitted to the State Clearinghouse; posted on the County's website (<http://www.placer.ca.gov/departments/communitydevelopment/envcoordsvcs/eir.aspx>); and was made available at the Tahoe City and Truckee libraries. In addition, the revised NOP was distributed directly to public agencies (including potential responsible and trustee agencies), interested parties, and organizations. The revised NOP was circulated for 30 days, through March 24, 2014.

All comments on environmental issues received during the two NOP public comment periods are considered and addressed in this DEIR.

### 1.7.3 Public Review of This DEIR

This DEIR is being circulated for public review and comment for a period of 60 days, from **May 18, 2015 to July 17, 2015**.

A public hearing will be held on **June 25, 2015**, to receive input from agencies and the public on the DEIR.

During the public comment period, written comments from the general public as well as organizations and agencies on the DEIR's accuracy and completeness may be submitted to the lead agency. Because of time limits mandated by State law, comments shall be provided no later than 5:00 p.m. on July 17, 2015. Please send all comments to:

Placer County, Planning Services Division  
3091 County Center Drive  
Auburn, CA 95603  
Attention: Maywan Krach, Community Development Technician  
Telephone: (530) 745-3132 Fax: (530) 745-3080  
Email: [cdraecs@placer.ca.gov](mailto:cdraecs@placer.ca.gov)

Responsible, trustee, and local agencies that will need to rely on or otherwise use the EIR when considering permits or other approvals for the project should provide the name of a contact person. Comments provided by email should include "Village at Squaw Valley Specific Plan Project DEIR Comment" in the subject line, and the name and physical address of the commenter in the body of the email.

Copies of this DEIR are available for public review at the following locations:

Tahoe City Library  
740 N. Lake Blvd  
Tahoe City, CA 96145

Truckee Library  
10031 Levon Avenue  
Truckee, CA 96161

Squaw Valley Public Service District  
305 Squaw Valley Road  
Olympic Valley, CA 96146

The DEIR is also available for public review online at:

<http://www.placer.ca.gov/departments/communitydevelopment/envcoordsvcs/eir.aspx>.

In addition, project information including the complete Specific Plan is available for review at:

<http://www.placer.ca.gov/departments/communitydevelopment/planning/villageatsquawvalleyspecificplan>.

## 1.7.4 Final EIR

Upon completion of the public review and comment period, a final EIR (FEIR) will be prepared that will include both written and oral comments on the DEIR received during the public review period, responses to those comments, and any revisions to the DEIR. The DEIR and the FEIR will comprise the EIR for the Village at Squaw Valley Specific Plan Project.

Before considering approval of the project, the lead agency, the Placer County Board of Supervisors, is required to certify that the EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, that the decision-making body has reviewed and considered the information in the EIR, and that the EIR reflects the independent judgment of the lead agency.

## 1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THIS DEIR

This DEIR is organized as follows:

**Chapter 1, Introduction:** This chapter describes the purpose and intended uses of the DEIR, the scope of the environmental analysis (including the effects found not to be significant), the public review process, and organization of the DEIR.

**Chapter 2, Executive Summary:** This chapter introduces the project, and lists significant environmental impacts and mitigation measures to reduce significant impacts to a less-than-significant level. A summary of alternatives to the project is presented and the environmentally superior alternative is identified. Finally, areas of controversy as well as issues to be resolved are described.

**Chapter 3, Project Description:** This chapter begins by describing the project location, study area characteristics, and project objectives. The proposed VSVSP is described in detail. Intended uses of the DEIR, as well as required permits and approvals, and consultation requirements are also presented.

**Chapters 4 through 16:** These chapters evaluate the reasonably foreseeable and potentially significant adverse environmental impacts anticipated to result from approval of the proposed VSVSP. Within each chapter, the environmental setting, regulatory setting, significance criteria, and the analysis methodology and assumptions are described. The anticipated changes to the existing environmental conditions after development of the project are then evaluated for each resource. For any significant or potentially significant impact that would result from project implementation, mitigation measures are presented along with the remaining level of significance. Environmental impacts are numbered sequentially throughout Chapters 4 through 16 (e.g. Impact 4-1, Impact 4-2, etc.). A bold-font impact statement, a summary of each impact, and its level of significance precedes the discussion of each impact. The discussion that follows the impact summary includes the substantial evidence supporting the impact significance conclusion.

The DEIR describes feasible measures that could avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, or compensate for significant adverse impacts (PRC Section 21081.6[b]). Mitigation measures are not required for effects that are found to be less than significant. Where feasible mitigation for a significant impact is available, it is described along with its effectiveness at addressing the impact. Each identified mitigation measure is labeled numerically to correspond with the number of the impact that would be mitigated by the measure. If sufficient feasible mitigation is not available to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level, or where the County lacks the authority to ensure that the mitigation is implemented when needed, the impacts are considered “significant and unavoidable.”

**Chapter 17, Alternatives:** This chapter provides a discussion of alternatives to the proposed VSVSP, including the No Project Alternative; alternatives considered, but not analyzed in detail; and the environmentally

superior alternative. Evaluation of the alternatives is provided in sufficient detail to allow comparison with the project as well as the potential for approval.

**Chapter 18, Other CEQA Sections:** This chapter provides information regarding the potential cumulative impacts that would result from implementation of the proposed VSVSP together with other past, present, and probable future projects. Additionally, this chapter provides a discussion of significant and unavoidable impacts, significant and irreversible environmental commitments, and potential direct and indirect growth-inducing impacts.

**Chapter 19, Report Preparers:** This chapter identifies the lead agency contacts as well as the preparers of this DEIR.

**Chapter 20, References and Persons Consulted:** This chapter identifies the organizations and persons consulted during preparation of this DEIR and the documents used as sources for the analysis.