

Memo

To: City of Santa Rosa From: Stantec Consulting Services Inc.

File: Sustainable Communities Date: October 1, 2020

Environmental Assessment

Reference: Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA)

Also known as "The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008," California Senate Bill (SB) 375 outlines growth strategies that better integrate regional land use and transportation planning and that help meet the State of California's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction mandates. SB 375 requires the state's 18 metropolitan planning organizations to incorporate a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) into the regional transportation plans to achieve their respective region's GHG emission reduction targets set by the California Air Resources Board (CARB). Correspondingly, SB 375 provides various California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) streamlining provisions for projects that are consistent with an adopted, applicable SCS and that meet certain objective criteria; one such CEQA streamlining tool is the Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA) for qualifying transit priority projects.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) are the joint metropolitan planning organization for the San Francisco Bay Area region, including Sonoma County. On July 26, 2017, MTC and ABAG jointly adopted its second Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)/SCS known as Plan Bay Area 2040 (Plan Bay Area), which serves as an update to the 2013 Plan Bay Area RTP/SCS.

Public Resource Code (PRC) Section 21155 sets forth the requirements for a project to qualify as a transit priority project. To qualify, a project must be (a) consistent with the general use designation, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the project area in a SCS (see California PRC Section 21155[a]); and (b) a "transit priority project" (as defined in California PRC Section 21155[b]). Therefore, a qualifying project is eligible for the CEQA streamlining benefit of preparing an SCEA for the purposes of compliance with CEQA.

To use a SCEA, PRC Sections 21151.2(a) and 21159.28(a) further require that a transit priority project incorporate all relevant, feasible, and applicable mitigation measures, performance standards, and criteria from prior applicable EIRs, which, in Santa Rosa, would include the City of Santa Rosa General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and the Plan Bay Area Program EIR.

A project would be subject to all relevant programs and policies of the City of Santa Rosa General Plan The Plan Bay Area EIR serves as an informational document to inform decision-makers and the public of the potential environmental consequences of approving the Plan Bay Area. The Plan Bay Area EIR includes mitigation measures designed to help avoid or minimize significant environmental impacts. It is the intent of MTC/ABAG that lead agencies and others use the information contained within the Plan Bay Area Program EIR in order to "tier" subsequent environmental documentation of projects in the region. As such, an SCEA, where applicable, incorporates relevant mitigation measures previously identified by the Plan Bay Area EIR. If a project was found not to be in substantial compliance with a previously identified mitigation measure, then a project-specific mitigation measure would be implemented. The applicable mitigation measures previously identified by the Plan Bay Area EIR are incorporated in the respective resource sections of the SCEA.

An SCEA, presented to assist with CEQA compliance review, can be used by the City of Santa Rosa to make the

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following required findings:

- (a) the project is consistent with the general use designations, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the project site in the Plan Bay Area 2040 prepared by the MTC/ABAG for the San Francisco Bay Region;
- (b) the project qualifies as a transit priority project pursuant to PRC Section 21155(b);
- (c) the project is a residential or mixed-use project as defined in PRC Section 21159.28(d);
- (d) all potentially significant or significant effects required to be identified and analyzed pursuant to CEQA have been identified and analyzed in an initial study; and
- (e) the project, as mitigated, either avoids or mitigates to a level of insignificance all potentially significant or significant effects of the project required to be analyzed pursuant to CEQA.

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