

## 4.0 EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The following chapter contains 12 sections, each of which addresses one environmental topic outlined in Appendix G of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (*State CEQA Guidelines*) (California Code of Regulations [CCR] Title 14, Chapter 3, Sections 15000–15397).

For each environmental impact issue analyzed, the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) includes a detailed explanation of the existing conditions, thresholds of significance that will be applied to determine whether the proposed Tirador Residential Development Project's (proposed project) impacts are significant, analysis of the environmental impacts, and a determination of whether the proposed project would have a significant impact if implemented. 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 CCR 15382). Each environmental topic section in Chapter 4.0 also includes 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 *State CEQA Guidelines*.

Each of the 12 sections is organized into subsections, as follows:

1. **Introduction** briefly describes the topics and issues covered in the section.
2. **Scoping Process** describes the comment letters received during the public review period of the Initial Study/Notice of Preparation (IS/NOP) that are related to the topic.
3. **Methodology** describes the approach and methods employed to complete the environmental analysis for the issue under investigation.
4. **Existing Environmental Setting** describes the physical conditions that existed at the time the Notice of Preparation was prepared and distributed that may influence or affect the issue under investigation. This section focuses on physical site characteristics that are relevant to the environmental topic being analyzed.
5. **Regulatory Setting** lists and discusses the laws, ordinances, regulations, and policies that relate to the specific environmental topic and how they apply to the proposed project.
6. **Thresholds of Significance** provides the thresholds that are the basis of the conclusions of significance, which are based on the criteria in Appendix G of the *State CEQA Guidelines* and the City of San Juan Capistrano's *Local Guidelines for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act* (2019).
7. **Project Impacts** describes the potential environmental changes to the existing physical conditions that may occur if the proposed project is implemented. Evidence is presented to show the cause-and-effect relationship between the proposed project and potential changes in the environment. The exact magnitude, duration, extent, frequency, and range or other parameters of a potential impact are ascertained to the extent feasible to determine whether

impacts may be significant. In accordance with CEQA, potential project impacts, if any, are classified as follows for each of the environmental topics discussed in this Draft EIR.

- a. **Significant Adverse Impact.** Significant adverse impacts are those that cannot be fully mitigated or avoided. If the project is approved, decision-makers are required to adopt a statement of overriding considerations pursuant to *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15093 explaining why the project benefits outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects caused by these significant adverse environmental impacts.
  - b. **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated.** This classification refers to significant environmental impacts that can be feasibly mitigated or avoided. If the project is approved, decision-makers are required to make findings pursuant to *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15091 that adverse significant impacts have been mitigated to the maximum extent feasible through the implementation of mitigation measures.
  - c. **Less than Significant Impact.** Less than significant impacts are environmental impacts that have been identified but are not significant. No mitigation is required for less than significant impacts.
  - d. **No Impact.** A “no impact” determination is made when the proposed project is found to have no environmental impact.
8. **Level of Significance Prior to Mitigation** describes the significance of potential impacts prior to implementation of mitigation measures.
  9. **Regulatory Compliance Measures (RCMs)** are specific standards imposed by the approving agency and are required of the proposed project to reduce its potential environmental effects. Because these features are regulatory, and therefore required, they do not constitute mitigation measures.
  10. **Mitigation Measures** are project-specific measures that would be required for the project to avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, eliminate, or compensate for a potentially significant adverse impact.
  11. **Level of Significance after Mitigation** describes the significance of potential impacts after implementation of mitigation measures. Potential significant unavoidable impacts are clearly stated in this section.
  12. **Cumulative Impacts** refers to potential environmental changes to the existing physical conditions that may occur as a result of project implementation together with all other reasonably foreseeable, planned, and approved future projects producing related impacts. Section 15355 of the *State CEQA Guidelines* defines cumulative impacts as “two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts.” Cumulative impacts may result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time. For each of the environmental topics considered in this Draft EIR, the geographic scope of the cumulative analysis is defined. For example, the geographic scope of the cumulative analysis for potential cumulative hydrology and water quality impacts includes all areas within the defined watershed.