

## 9.0 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

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The *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines* require a discussion of “significant irreversible environmental changes which would be caused by the Specific Plan should it be implemented.”<sup>1</sup> The use of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the specific plan may be irreversible since a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely. Primary impacts and, particularly, secondary impacts (such as a highway improvement which provides access to a previously inaccessible area) generally commit future generations to similar uses. Also, irreversible damage can result from environmental accidents associated with the specific plan. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to ensure that such current consumption is justified.

The construction and use of residential and commercial uses would irreversibly commit construction materials and nonrenewable energy resources to the purposes of the specific plan. These energy resource demands would be used for construction, heating and cooling of buildings, transportation of people and goods, as well as lighting and other associated energy needs. Nonrenewable and slowly renewable resources used by the specific plan land uses and improvements would include, but are not limited to, lumber and other forest products, sand and gravel, asphalt, petrochemical construction materials, steel, copper, lead and other metals, and water. A marginal increase in the commitment of facility maintenance services would also be required. Primary specific plan impacts related to consumption of nonrenewable and slowly renewable resources are considered to be less than significant because specific plan buildout would not use unusual amounts of energy or construction materials.

Implementation of the City of Paso Robles' *Downtown Specific Plan / Uptown & Town Centre* could induce development as a result of removal of obstacles to growth. This could result in secondary environmental impacts (e.g., additional noise and traffic), and may increase the use of nonrenewable resources and energy to serve new development. However, as described in **Section 8.0, Growth-Inducing Impacts**, the nature and magnitude of such impacts are speculative, and would be largely a function of local agency control, prevailing community attitudes, and future market conditions. In addition, the site is surrounded by existing urban development. Therefore, future development in accordance with the specific plan would be considered infill development. The environmental impacts of any additional growth would depend upon the type, location, and magnitude of new development.

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<sup>1</sup> California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, *State CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15126(c).

The specific plan would result in several traffic and circulation impacts that would be considered significant even with the implementation of identified circulation improvements that would be either directly provided by the applicant, or partially funded through the payment of fair-share traffic impact fees.

Buildout of the specific plan would result in the emission of air pollutants at levels that would exceed the APCD's significance thresholds for NO<sub>x</sub>, ROC, and PM<sub>10</sub>, as described in **Section 6.2, Air Quality**. As described in **Section 6.10, Noise**, the specific plan would increase the traffic along roads.

As discussed in **Section 6.4, Cultural Resources**, development of the specific plan could result in demolition of existing structures that may be historically significant and potential disturbance of prehistoric artifacts, which would be considered a significant but mitigable (Class II) impact.

Development under the specific plan would potentially discharge sedimentation and pollutant discharges as well as potentially increase peak stormwater discharges and volumes of runoff into the watershed (refer to **Section 6.7, Hydrology and Water Quality**). However, the plan provides for sustainable features that would improve the overall water quality of stormwater runoff.

The biological resources would also be impacted as a result of development and associated activities in the specific plan area (refer to **Section 6.3, Biological Resources**). As described in **Sections 6.12 through 6.16 (Public Services)**, and **6.18 through 6.20, (Utilities)**, the specific plan development would require the irreversible commitment of law enforcement, fire protection, sanitation services, water supply, and solid waste disposal.