



NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

Date: June 28, 2024

To: State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Interested Parties, and Organizations

Subject: **Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Wicklow Way Specific Plan**

Lead Agency: Amador County

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Purpose of Notice

Amador County (County) as the Lead Agency is preparing the Wicklow Way Specific Plan (WWSP) or Project, which is a Specific Plan governing the development of the 201-acre WWSP project area. The County has completed the preparation of a draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; California Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et seq.), and Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CEQA Guidelines). The County has prepared this Notice of Availability (NOA) in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Because the County has determined that an EIR is required for the Project, pursuant to Section 15060(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, preparation of an Initial Study is not required and therefore one has not been prepared.

The purpose of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is to inform decision-makers and the general public of the environmental effects of a project that an agency may implement or approve. The EIR process is intended to provide information sufficient to evaluate a project and its potential for significant impacts on the environment, to examine methods of reducing adverse impacts, and to consider alternatives to the project.

The EIR for the proposed project will be prepared and processed in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended. In accordance with the requirements of CEQA, the EIR will include the following:

- A summary of the project;
- A project description;
- A description of the existing environmental setting, environmental impacts, and mitigation measures for the project;
- Alternatives to the project as proposed; and
- Environmental consequences, including (a) any significant environmental effects which cannot be avoided if the project is implemented; (b) any significant irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources; (c) the growth inducing impacts of the proposed project; and (d) cumulative impacts.

Project Location and Setting

The 201-acre WWSP site lies in unincorporated Amador County, immediately west of the Jackson city limits, and one mile south of the City of Sutter Creek. The Project Site is south of Highway 88 and approximately one mile west of the Highway 88 and Highway 49 intersection in the Martell Regional Service Center area of the County. The Project Site is undeveloped and contains grass lands, oak woodland, and drainage areas, including tributaries to Rock Creek. The WWSP site slopes downward to both the east and west and ranges in elevation from approximately 1,500 feet above mean sea level in the east portion of the site to 1,400 feet in the south portion of the site. The property is County-owned.

Wicklow Way abuts the Project Site on the northwest and provides a main entrance into the Project area from Highway 88. Existing commercial uses are also located to the north. Residential uses abut the eastern boundary, as does Argonaut High School. Open grazing land is located to the east, west, and south. Lands south and west of the Project Site are undeveloped. The project site is currently used for grazing.

Project Description

The WWSP is the primary land use, policy, and regulatory document used to guide the overall development of the 201-acre site. The WWSP establishes a development framework for land use, circulation, utilities and services, resource protection, and implementation. All subsequent development projects and related activities are required to be consistent with the WWSP.

The proposed WWSP land use designations are summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Land Use Summary

Land Use Designation		Applied Zoning District	Acres	% of Total Acres	Units	% of Total Units
Residential						
LDR	Low Density Residential	PD-R1	41.1	20%	280	40%
MDR	Medium Density Residential	PD-R2	27.6	14%	220	31%
HDR	High Density Residential	PD-R3	9.0	4%	200	29%
	<i>Subtotal</i>		77.7	39%	700	100.00%
Commercial/Office						

CC	Community Commercial	PD-CC	12.0	6%		
PQ/P	Civic Center	PQ/P	12.4	6%		
	<i>Subtotal</i>		24.4	12%		
Open Space and Public						
OS	Open Space	OS	53.7	27%		
PR	Parks and Recreation	PR	10.0	5%		
	<i>Subtotal</i>		63.7	32%		
PQ/P	Electric Substation	PQ/P	1.0			
	Sewer Lift Station		1.0			
	Fire Station		2.6			
	Wastewater Treatment		9.7			
	Elementary School		8.8			
	Major Streets		12.9			
	<i>Subtotal</i>		36.0	17%		
Total			201.8	100.0%	700	100.0%

As shown above, the WWSP would provide a potential new County administrative offices/civic center, and a total of 700 residential units with a range of densities on approximately 80 acres that would accommodate approximately 1,800 residents. Proposed land uses also include approximately 26 acres for community commercial and civic uses; 46 acres of open space; 6.9 acres for parks and recreation; and 42 acres for public uses. To preserve options, the land use plan assumes a 9.7-acre site for an onsite wastewater treatment plant, should it be needed in the future. The Community Commercial (CC) land use designation provides a broad range of neighborhood serving retail goods and services, such as grocery stores, restaurants, and offices. The Open Space (OS) land use designation is intended to preserve and protect Rock Creek and its intermittent tributaries, and oak woodlands. The Parks and Recreation (PR) land use designation is applied to a combination of planned active and passive recreation facilities. The Public/Quasi Public (PQ/P) land use designation provides community serving uses such as civic, education, public services, and utilities.

Specific Plan Vision

The vision for the Wicklow Way Specific Plan (WWSP) is to create a new community that meets or exceeds the County’s development standards through amenities and services and distinguishes itself through an efficient design and development pattern. Once developed, the WWSP makes connections between existing commercial, residential, and school uses. These connections include the creation of urban land uses, expansion of open space preserves, new circulation linkages, and connections via a pedestrian and bicycle network. In addition to advancing the County’s efforts to meet its fair share obligation of the region’s housing needs, the WWSP demonstrates an emerging approach to development which results in a more efficient use of land, with higher densities and significant open space preservation.

The land use plan for WWSP includes a diversity of housing types, compact design, a local-serving community commercial node with office and business professional uses, efficient vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle circulation, resource conservation and proximate access to parks and open space. The residential component on the eastern side of the WWSP area allows opportunities for students to walk to the adjacent Argonaut High School.

It should be noted that no specific development is proposed and no developer is participating in the project at this time. The specific plan will establish land uses. The buildout of the plan area is expected to be a 20-year timeframe. At the time specific development is proposed additional entitlements, design review, and potential additional environment review will be required.

Potential Environmental Effects

The EIR describes existing environmental resources and current conditions in the WWSP area, evaluates the environmental impacts of implementing the WWSP, and, where applicable, identifies feasible mitigation measures to reduce or avoid significant environmental impacts. The EIR will also evaluate alternatives to the Project that meet most of the project objectives, are feasible, and reduce at least one significant impact of the Project. The analysis will focus on the reasonably foreseeable direct and indirect physical environmental impacts that could result from implementation of the WWSP.

Aesthetics	Land Use and Planning
Agricultural Resources	Mineral Resources
Air Quality	Noise
Biological Resources	Population and Housing
Cultural Resources	Public Services
Energy	Recreation
Geology, Soils, and Seismicity	Transportation
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Tribal Cultural Resources
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Utilities and Service Systems
Hydrology and Water Quality	Wildfire

Potential Environmental Impacts of the Project

The EIR identifies significant environmental effects anticipated to result from implementation of the Proposed Project. These effects may pertain to: (1) conformance with existing plans and policies of Amador County, (2) transportation; (3) sensitive biological species and habitats; (4) construction-related air quality and greenhouse gas emissions; (5) historic and archaeological resources; (6) construction-related noise; (7) aesthetics; and (8) wildfire.

The EIR evaluates possible alternatives to the proposed project, including the No Project Alternative. The alternative discussion will focus on those alternatives that could feasibly accomplish most of the basic purposes of the project while also avoiding or substantially lessening one or more of the significant effects.

Project Approvals

For the purposes of CEQA, the term “Responsible Agency” includes all public agencies other than the Lead Agency which have discretionary approval power over the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15381). Discretionary approval power may include such actions as issuance of a permit or authorization.

The following are specific County, State, and federal entitlements that must be granted prior to approval and/or implementation of the WWSP.

- Adoption of a Water Supply Assessment
- Adoption of a General Plan Amendment
- Adoption of the WWSP and Design Guidelines by Amador County
- Certification of the EIR by Amador County
- Adoption of the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan by Amador County
- Approval of Development Agreements by Amador County
- Approval of Large Lot Tentative and Final Subdivision Maps by Amador County
- Approval of Small Lot Tentative and Final Subdivision Maps by Amador County
- Design Review by Amador County
- Planned Development Approval by Amador County
- Approval of Lot Line Adjustments by Amador County
- Approval of Engineering Improvement Plans by Amador County
- Approval of Conditional Use Permits by Amador County
- Approval of Grading Plans by Amador County
- Approval of a water supply
- Approval of wastewater treatment plant capacity including potential for a new onsite wastewater treatment plant.
- Army Corps of Engineers - Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit for fill of wetlands and/or waters of the U.S.
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service Consultation for potential impacts to federally listed species in accordance with the Federal Endangered Species Act and Agreements pursuant to Section 7 of the Federal Endangered Species Act
- State Historic Preservation Office – Consultation regarding impacts to historic properties in accordance with Section 106 of the Nation Historic Preservation Act. May be necessary should Federal Permitting be required for the Proposed Project.
- Regional Water Quality Control Board – Central Valley Region – 401 Water Quality Certification, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) discharge permit for stormwater and/or wastewater, and Master Reclamation Permit for Recycled Water
- State Water Resources Control Board Division of Drinking Water - Public/Community Water System Permit
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife – Section 1600 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement and consultation related to potential impacts to state listed species and species of concern

Public Review Process

Although CEQA does not require formal hearings at any stage of the environmental review process (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15202[a]), it does encourage “wide public involvement, formal and informal...in

order to receive and evaluate public reactions to environmental issues” (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15201) and requires the lead agency to provide the public with the opportunity to provide comments. The County, as lead agency, circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR (SCH # 2023010563) for the proposed project on January 27, 2024. The NOP was distributed for a 30-day comment period that ended on February 28, 2023. In addition, the County held a public scoping meeting on Tuesday, February 14, 2023 to solicit input on the scope and focus of the EIR. Comments received on the NOP and during the public scoping meeting were considered in the preparation of the EIR. The DEIR incorporates public and agency responses to the NOP. Like the NOP, the DEIR is being circulated for review and comment by appropriate agencies, as well as organizations and individuals who have requested notification.

In accordance with Section 15205(d) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the County has scheduled a 45-day public review period for the DEIR, beginning July 3, 2024 and ending on August 16, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. Within that 45-day period, the County will hold one public hearing to request comments on the DEIR within that time period.

The Draft EIR is available for review during normal business hours at the following location(s):

- Amador County Public Library 530 Sutter St, Jackson, CA 95642
- Pioneer Branch Public Library 25070 Buckhorn Ridge Rd, Pioneer, CA 95666
- Pine Grove Branch Public Library Located in Town Hall, 19889 Hwy 88 Pine Grove, CA 95665
- Lone Public Library 25 E Main St, Lone, CA 95640
- Amador County Planning Department at 810 Court Street, Jackson, CA 95642

Alternate formats of this document are available upon request. If reasonable accommodation is needed, call the Planning Department at (209) 223-6380. Comments must be mailed to Chuck Beatty at the above address, or emailed to: planning@amadorgov.org.

Following the close of the public review period for the DEIR, the County will prepare a final EIR, incorporating all comments received during the public comment period, for consideration by the Planning Commission and or Board of Supervisors, at a date for which notice shall be provided. As required by CEQA (Section 21092.5), the final EIR, including written responses to the comments submitted by public agencies, will be available at least 10 days prior to certification.