

# STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS STERLING RANCH RESIDENTIAL PROJECT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (STATE CLEARINGHOUSE NUMBER 2019080092)

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## Lead Agency:

County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning

The California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") requires a public agency to balance the benefits of a proposed project against the proposed project's significant and unavoidable adverse impacts in determining whether to approve the project. The Sterling Ranch Estates Residential Project, encompassing the approvals listed above, will result in environmental effects, which, although mitigated to the extent feasible by the implementation of mitigation measures required for the Project, will remain significant and unavoidable, as discussed in the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and CEQA Findings of Fact. These impacts are summarized below and constitute the impact for which this Statement of Overriding Considerations is made.

## Operational Significant and Unavoidable Impacts:

1. Despite the implementation of all feasible and reasonable mitigation, the Project would have a significant and unavoidable impact on vehicle miles travelled (VMT), which is a CEQA threshold the County is required to implement since July 1, 2020. When addressing VMT impacts, the County has established baseline VMT metrics by region, which is divided into the "North County" and "South County" of which the Project site is located within the North County. The regional threshold for the North County area is 18.6 residential home-based (HB) VMT per capita. The adjusted residential HB VMT per capita for the Project site and Val Verde community area is 34.2 residential HB VMT per capita under one of two methods to calculate Project VMT and 24.4 HB VMT per capita under the second method to calculate Project VMT, while the Santa Clarita Planning Area is 24.1 residential HB VMT per capita. With the implementation of project design features **PDF 5.15-1** through **PDF 5.15-5** and **Mitigation Measure MM 5.15-2** through **MM 5.15-6**, the residential portion of the Project would generate approximately 30.1 residential HB VMT per capita under the first method and 21.4 HB VMT per capita under the second method. Thus, the Project's residential HB VMT per capita would be above the regional threshold even with implementation of project design features and mitigation measures. A fifteen percent reduction is generally considered the maximum VMT reduction for a project in a suburban setting. As such, the residential portion

of the Project would have a significant and unavoidable impact on VMT even with implementation of proposed mitigation.

**Finding:** The Regional Planning Commission of the County of Los Angeles finds and determines in approving the Sterling Ranch Residential Estates Project that the Final EIR has considered the identified means of lessening or avoiding the Project's significant effects and that to the extent any significant environmental effect remains unavoidable or not mitigated to below a level of significance after mitigation, such impact is acceptable in light of the social, legal, economic, environmental, technological and other Project benefits discussed below, and such benefits override, outweigh, and make "acceptable" any such remaining environmental impacts of the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15092(b)).

The following benefits and considerations, taken together or individually, outweigh such significant and unavoidable adverse environmental impacts. All of these benefits and considerations are based on the facts set forth in the Findings, the Final EIR (including, without limitation, the response to comments and appendices and attachments thereto), and the record of proceedings for the Project. This Regional Planning Commission of the County of Los Angeles determines that the evidence in the record constitutes substantial evidence to support the determinations made in this Statement of Overriding Considerations, that the facts stated in this document and in the Findings are supported by substantial evidence in the record, including testimony received at the public hearing, the staff presentations, staff reports and all materials in the project files. The Regional Planning Commission also determines that to the extent other evidence was presented that is contrary to the determinations made herein or in the Findings, such evidence was nevertheless considered, weighed and determined to be either lacking in credibility or insufficient in weight to detract from the determinations made herein or in the Findings such that the Regional Planning Commission reached these determinations after due consideration of all evidence presented to it. Each of these benefits and considerations is a separate and independent basis that justifies approval of the Project, so that if a court were to set aside the determination that any particular benefit or consideration will occur and justifies project approval, this Regional Planning Commission determines that it would stand by its determination that the remaining benefit(s) or consideration(s) is or are sufficient to warrant project approval.

**Facts in Support of Statement of Overriding Considerations:** Each benefit set forth below constitutes an overriding consideration warranting approval of the Project, independent of the other benefits, and the Regional Planning Commission determines that the adverse environmental impacts of the Project are "acceptable" if any one of these benefits will be realized. The Project will provide benefits to Los Angeles County and the region as follows:

1. **Provides Economic Benefits and Jobs to Los Angeles County:** At buildout, the Project is expected to annually generate revenue to the County General Fund from property taxes, transfer taxes, sales and use taxes, utility user taxes, business license taxes, and other governmental revenues that more than offset the annual cost of re-occurring public services to the Project, representing an annual net benefit to the General Fund. General Fund revenues are used for a wide variety of County services and activities and are subject to the appropriation discretion of the County Board of Supervisors, and a portion of property taxes are also paid directly to local school districts, thereby increasing funding for local schools.
2. **Provide Housing in Close Proximity to Existing Employment Centers:** The Project will provide single-family residences and neighborhood-serving commercial uses in the Val Verde community of the Castaic area consistent with the Castaic Area Community Standards District and Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan: One Valley One Vision (SCVAP 2012) to help accommodate the need for housing in the County. The Project would include the development of 222 single-family homes and approximately 21,000 square feet of neighborhood-serving commercial space consistent with the existing land use and zoning designations of the Project site. The Project's housing supports regional housing goals that promote housing production and General Plan Housing Element goals.
3. **Preserve in Perpetuity a 37.9-acre undeveloped parcel and other open space:** The Project would preserve in perpetuity the 37.9-acre Off-Site Open Space Dedication Area for permanent conservation between existing and proposed development and other existing conservation areas to preserve regionally significant natural resource areas, flora, fauna, wildlife corridors, and open space area. Additional open space within the VTTM site would include the approximately 12.6 acres of natural undisturbed open space, 9.9 acres of manufactured open space, approximately 3.6 acres of passive park areas, the private multi-use Sterling Horn Memorial trail, approximately 19.8 acres associated with the fuel modification area, and the six landscaped open space lots on 0.1-acres.
4. **Sustainability and Efficiency:** The Project also would implement sustainability features to comply with the Los Angeles County Green Building Ordinance, Green Building Standards Code (Title 31), and Drought-Tolerant Landscaping Ordinance. The Project would include the following: solar roofs on residences and solar-ready electric vehicle stations; Energy Star appliances; energy-efficient central gas furnace and water heaters; energy efficient insulation in the attic and walls; energy-efficient light bulbs; energy-efficient windows (low emissivity window glazing); use of low volatile organic compound (VOC) interior and exterior paint (interior EF 50 to 250 grams per liter [g/L], exterior EF 100 to 250 g/L) and cleaning supplies; water conservation features such as low-flow toilets (1.6 gallons per flush), faucets (automatically turn off when not in use), and showerheads (2.5 gallons per minute);

water-efficient irrigation systems (weather-based irrigation controller with rain shutoff, matched precipitation [flow] rates for sprinkler heads, drip/microspray/subsurface irrigation where appropriate); and 50 percent diversion of construction and demolition debris from County landfills.

5. **Community Safety:** The Project has been designed in compliance with all proposed State and County requirements related to land management within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, including an approved Fuel Modification Plan. The Project would not result in significant wildfire-related impacts on the Project site or result in a decline in existing service levels in the area. Additionally, the one-million-gallon water tank that would be constructed as part of the Project would provide an additional supply of water to support firefighting suppression activities for the community.

**Conclusion:** CEQA requires a public agency to balance the benefits of a proposed project against its significant and unavoidable adverse impacts in determining whether to approve the project. As discussed more fully above, the Project would result in a significant and unavoidable project-level impact to transportation (VMT), which, although mitigated to the extent feasible by the implementation of mitigation measures required for the Project, will remain an unavoidable significant adverse impact. This Regional Planning Commission finds that such impacts are at an acceptable level in light of each of the Project benefits described above and make "acceptable" any such remaining significant environmental impacts of the Project.