CEQA California Environmental Quality Act

FACT SHEET

What is the California Environmental Quality Act *or* CEQA?

- State law implemented in 1970
- One of California's most important environmental laws, requiring consideration of environmental consequences of proposed projects
- Applies to projects subject to discretionary approval by a California state or local government agency

What is the Purpose of CEQA?

- Inform government agency decisionmakers and the public of potential environmental consequences of a project, and disclose reasons for approval if adverse impacts may occur
- Identify ways to avoid, minimize, and prevent environmental impacts of projects through alternatives or mitigation
- Encourage public and agency participation and feedback on proposed projects, potential impacts, and avoidance or mitigation measures

What is the Role of the Public?

- Public involvement is key to the CEQA process
- The public is encouraged to:
  - Participate during the public review period to provide feedback on the proposed project
  - Comment on the adequacy of environmental documents
  - Inform project design, alternatives, and avoidance and mitigation measures

Key CEQA Terms

- **Project** = an activity with the potential to result in a direct or indirect change in the environment
- **Lead Agency** = public agency that has principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project
- **Discretionary Action** = actions that require judgement or consideration prior to approval by a public agency
- **Exemption** = types of projects determined to be exempt from CEQA
  - **Categorical Exemption** = applicable to classes of projects determined not have an impact on the environment
  - **Statutory Exemption** = applicable to projects that are exempted from CEQA by the State Legislature
- **Initial Study** = analysis by a Lead Agency to determine what level of review will be required based on potential environmental impacts associated with a proposed project
- **Mitigation** = requirement(s) placed on a project to reduce or eliminate environmental impacts
- **Negative Declaration (ND)** = a document describing the reasons a project will not result in significant effects on the environment
- **Mitigated ND (MND)** = same as ND, but includes measures for avoiding or mitigating otherwise significant effects on the environment
- **Environmental Impact Report (EIR)** = a document informing public and policymakers of significant environmental effects of a proposed project and ways to minimize those effects, and to evaluate project alternatives

5-8-2023

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PROCESS FLOW CHART

Project Identified

Is the Project exempt from CEQA?

Yes

No

Exemption

Initial Study

Will the Project have a significant impact on the environment?

Yes

No

EIR

Public review and input

ND / MND

Responses to Comments and Final Draft CEQA Document

Public Agency Considers Approval

For more information on the CEQA process, visit the Governor's Office of Planning and Research at www.opr.ca.gov/CEQA