



City of Moreno Valley Environmental Impact Report Format and Content Guidelines

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Community Development Department

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Purpose

This purpose of this document is to ensure Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) prepared for the City of Moreno Valley (City) are prepared in an organized, consistent, and legally adequate, timely, and cost efficient manner.

This document is intended to complement, not reproduce or replace, pertinent California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines sections governing the preparation of EIRs.

The City acknowledges that every project differs and appropriate format and content will require the discretion and technical expertise of the consultant to ensure that relevant details are included within each chapter to ensure an adequate and legally defensible document. However, for purposes of consistency in the preparation of City EIRs, these general format and content guidelines should be followed where feasible. Applicants and/or consultants shall coordinate with City staff when substantial deviations from these EIR content guidelines are proposed. The Lead Agency will provide final approval of the format and content of an EIR.

1.0 General Issues

1.1 Format

The length of EIRs must be kept to the absolute minimum necessary to accurately convey the pertinent issues and to contain the level of analysis required to legally comply with CEQA. Extraneous and "filler" material must always be omitted from EIRs. The CEQA Guidelines specifies that EIR text should normally be less than 150 pages, and that documents of unusual complexity should normally be less than 300 pages (CEQA Guidelines §15141).

The City encourages the total length of the narrative portion of the EIR to be kept below 150 pages. Exhibits, tables, and appendices are excluded from the page limitation (CEQA Guidelines §§15006, 15141, 15147).

1.2 Editorial Matters

It is expected that the EIR will be properly edited for correct format, spelling, grammar, page numbering, internal consistency and other editorial matters. The EIR must be prepared in a clear format, and written in clear language for review and understanding by decision-makers and the public (CEQA Guidelines §15140). Complex and extremely analytical materials must be summarized and simplified, with the details and harder to comprehend materials placed in the technical appendices.

The EIR must be written in a factual and objective manner. The document must provide a good faith effort of full disclosure. EIRs that attempt to "bias" the document in favor of, or against the project are unacceptable.

The EIR shall cite all documents used in its preparation including, where possible, the page and section number of any technical reports (CEQA Guidelines §15148). Other documents may be incorporated by reference, provided that the referenced document is summarized in the EIR and is made available for public inspection at a public place identified in the EIR, such as City offices (CEQA Guidelines §15150).

The EIR shall be printed double-sided to reduce the amount of paper consumed where practicable. It is permissible to print certain graphics single-sided and to start major sections on a front-facing page. Other exceptions may be permitted at the discretion of City staff.

2.0 EIR Format

All City EIRs shall follow the general outline provided below in order to provide environmental document consistency and assist the City with providing efficient and streamlined reviews.

The following is an outline of the preferred general format of the EIR to be used for City projects:

- Cover 3.1
- Cover Page 3.2
- Table of Contents 3.3
- List of Abbreviations/ Acronyms 3.4
- List of Commenters and Responses to Comments (Included in Final EIR) 3.5
- Executive Summary 3.6
- Introduction of Project 3.7
- Environmental Setting 3.8
- Project Description 4.0
- Environmental Analysis 5.0
- Additional CEQA Required Analysis 6.0
- Alternatives 7.0
- References 8.0

3.0 EIR Introductory Chapters

This section provides guidance for the chapter headings and general content requirements for the introductory chapters of the EIR.

3.1 Cover

The cover refers to the front exterior of the EIR. No slogans or company logos should appear. A picture representing the project may be included at the discretion of City staff. The cover must only include the following information:

- Name of Project
- Type of Project/State Clearinghouse Number
- Lead Agency (City) and address
- Date (to be revised upon each iteration/screencheck)

Each screencheck is to be numbered accordingly and identified as DRAFT until presented as Final (i.e., 1st Screencheck DRAFT, 2nd Screencheck DRAFT, Public Review Draft EIR, Screencheck Final EIR, and Final EIR).

3.2 Cover Page

The cover page refers to the first page on the interior of the EIR. The cover page must include the following information:

- Type of Project/ State Clearinghouse Number
- Name of Project
- Lead Agency (City) and address
- EIR Consultant's name and address
- Project Applicant's name and address
- Identification of discretionary permits including City permit numbers
- Date (see above)

3.3 Table of Contents

The Table of Contents is a mandatory section pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15122 and must facilitate use of the EIR.

The Table of Contents must include a list of figures, tables, and appendices. Figures and tables must be numbered sequentially by chapter (i.e., Figure 1-1), or by section (i.e., Figure 4.5-8). Technical appendices must be identified by letter and subject (e.g., Appendix B – Biological Resources Report).

Pages must be numbered sequentially by chapter.

3.4 List of Abbreviations/Acronyms

The List of Abbreviations/Acronyms must appear directly following the Table of Contents and must contain all abbreviations and acronyms used throughout the EIR, including technical, legal, and industry-related terms. The list must be alphabetical and clearly arranged.

The first time an abbreviation or acronym is utilized within an EIR, the full name must be provided followed by the form of abbreviation that will be used throughout the remainder of the document to represent that name.

3.5 List of Commenters/ Responses to Comments (Included in Final EIR)

This information should be added to the front of the Final EIR and should include the following:

- Introduction and explanation of Final EIR content requirements pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15132.
- List of the comment letters received in tabular format, including alphanumerical numbering of the letter, name of commenter or agency, and date received.
- Discussion of CEQA requirement to respond to substantive environmental comments.
- Comment letters separated by comment numbering, and followed by responses to each letter.
- Identification of additions, corrections and/or revisions to the Draft EIR as a result of comments received presented in tabular format including the page where changes has been made, chapter/section of EIR affected, and details of the change.
- Discussion of whether changes made to the EIR as a result of comments received would trigger the requirement for recirculation of the Draft EIR.

3.6 Executive Summary

The Executive Summary satisfies the requirements set forth in Guidelines §15123. The Executive Summary must be as concise as possible, using clear simple language, and in any case, should not exceed 15 pages. It is imperative that the Executive Summary is accurate and updated consistent with the project description and analysis within the EIR. The Executive Summary Chapter shall include an introduction to the project, project overview, discussion of the EIR process, a list of known controversial issues, a brief description of the project alternatives, and a summary table.

3.6.1 Introduction

This section includes an overview to the document including issue areas analyzed and an explanation of the analysis process.

3.6.2 Project Overview

This section provides a very, abbreviated discussion of the project including project description, location, and setting.

3.6.3 EIR Process

This section provides a description of the procedural requirements of CEQA related to the EIR process and includes relevant dates including issuance of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) and periods of public review.

3.6.5 Areas of Controversy

This section includes a list of areas of known controversy including issues raised by the applicant, City, or commenters. This section also includes identification of issues to be resolved by the decision making body including whether and how to mitigate significant effects, choices among project alternatives, conformance with City regulations and/or plans, and whether the project should be approved in light of irreversible commitment of non-renewable resources.

3.6.6 Project Alternatives

This section provides a brief summary of each project alternative, the significant effects associated with the alternatives, and which alternative is identified as environmentally superior.

3.6.7 Summary Table

A summary table that provides a summary of project impacts, mitigation measures and conclusions must be included.

3.7 Introduction (Chapter 1.0)

This chapter explains the purpose for the CEQA process and reasons for the preparation of an EIR.

3.7.1 Type of EIR

This section includes a discussion of the type of EIR being presented and an explanation for that choice. If relevant, this section will include a discussion of prior CEQA review (i.e., preparing a subsequent or supplemental EIR).

3.7.2 List of Project Approvals

This section includes a list of project approvals/discretionary permits for which the EIR is intended to be used and the agencies that are expected to use the EIR in their decision-making.

3.7.3 Statement of Legal Authority

This section provides a brief discussion identifying that the EIR has been prepared in accordance with all criteria, standards, and procedures of CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines.

3.7.4 Responsible/Trustee Agencies

This section provides a list of responsible and/or trustee agencies associated with the project approvals.

3.7.5 Scope of EIR

This section provides a summary of the environmental process to date including the date the NOP was issued and periods of public review, issue areas analyzed in the EIR, and a summary of any comments received in response to the NOP and where these issues are addressed in the EIR.

This section also includes a summary of where, throughout the EIR, all required discussion pursuant to CEQA may be found. This section also includes a textual summary of each chapter and what information/discussion it contains.

3.7.6 Incorporation by Reference

This section is based on CEQA Guidelines §15150 which allows for the incorporation “by reference all or portions of another document...[and is] most appropriate for including long, descriptive, or technical materials that provide general background but do not contribute directly to the analysis of a problem at hand.” The physical address where technical appendices are available for review must be provided.

3.8 Environmental Setting (Chapter 2.0)

This chapter generally includes a discussion of “baseline” physical environmental conditions of and in the vicinity of the project, including topography, vegetation/habitats, circulation, surrounding land uses and/or ownerships, geographic features such as lakes, streams, and canyons, and the major infrastructure both serving and in the vicinity of the proposed project.

The “baseline” normally constitutes the environmental conditions as they existed at the time the NOP is published, or if no NOP is published, at the time environmental analysis is commenced (CEQA Guidelines §15125(a)). CEQA case law has set precedence for deviations in this definition of the baseline physical conditions. If a deviation is used, the reasons supporting the deviation must be supported by substantial evidence.

Note that special baseline rules for military base reuse is included in Public Resources Code §21083.8.1 and Guidelines §15229.

Unless otherwise directed by staff, the description of the environmental baseline conditions shall be based on the existing legal condition of the property, prior to any unauthorized activities (e.g., grading, clearing) or actions taken in preparation for the project, such as septic testing or geotechnical investigations.

This section also includes a discussion of the following details of the project:

- regional setting and location

- local setting and location
- surrounding land uses and development

3.8.1 Planning Context

This section provides details of the project in relation to City plans and should include figures to further depict project details such as existing and proposed General Plan and Zoning designations, if relevant.

3.8.2 Existing Physical Site Conditions

This section includes a discussion of the physical environmental condition for purposes of establishing the setting for the EIR. The discussion of the existing conditions should typically include, but not be limited to, the following topics, as appropriate:

- Land Use
- Aesthetic/Topographical Features
- Air Quality and Climate Conditions
- Known Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Existing Geology and Soils
- Hydraulic Conditions
- Noise Sources in the Project Vicinity
- Transportation Conditions
- Existing Utilities and Service Providers
- Vegetation
- Wildlife

4.0 Project Description (EIR Chapter 3.0)

The project description is the focus of much CEQA litigation concerning EIRs. Therefore, it is imperative that the content be included in sufficient detail and that the project description be accurate, complete, and consistent throughout the EIR.

This chapter of the EIR provides all of the information required to be included in the Project Description pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15124.

4.1 Project Location

The precise location and boundaries of the project site must be described. Regional, vicinity, and topographic location maps must be included to identify the boundaries of the project site and its location in relationship to surrounding land uses.

4.2 Statement of Objectives

The EIR shall include a clearly written statement of objectives which will help the lead agency develop a reasonable range of alternatives to evaluate in the EIR and will aid the decision makers in preparing findings, or a statement of overriding considerations if

required. The statement of objectives should include the underlying purpose of the project (see CEQA Guidelines §15124(b)).

4.3 Project's Component Parts

The narrative explanation shall be supplemented by a project plan or map of appropriate scale and legibility. Details of any project phasing must also be included in this section and must be supported by an illustration on the project plan or map, if possible. All of the steps in project implementation must be described including planning, phasing, steps in project implementation, acquisition, construction, off-site improvements, operation, and decommissioning, if applicable. Important elements of a project description are discussed below.

Appropriate subheadings may be added in this section to provide a complete and detailed project description. At a minimum a site plan should be provided. Additional figures to represent the proposed project may be needed.

4.3.1 Associated Project Actions

A subheading should be included to identify the associated discretionary actions that would be required to implement the project such as discussion of proposed changes to a site's General Plan designation, zoning, and all required permits and approvals.

4.3.2 Project Technical Characteristics

This includes a general description of the project's technical, economic, and environmental characteristics. Key characteristics could include some or all of the following:

- All on-site and off-site access improvements;
- All on-site and off-site infrastructure improvements (e.g., water, sewer, storm water);
- Grading and construction characteristics including length and timing of construction, and types of equipment; and
- Operational characteristics such as hours of operation and description of activities associated with the project such as special events or other uses.

Any off-site improvements and/or off-site ground disturbance required for the project must be included.

4.4 City Review Process

This section includes a discussion of City departments and divisions that were responsible for reviewing the EIR for technical accuracy.

4.5 Related Environmental Review and Consultation Requirements

This section includes a tabular list of all government agencies that are expected to use the EIR and provides a summary of the subsequent actions associated with the project.

Section 5 Environmental Analysis (Chapter 4.0)

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines §§15126–15126.4, EIR Chapter 4.0, Environmental Analysis, includes analyses of potential direct, indirect, and cumulatively-considerable impacts that could occur from planning, acquisition, constructing, and/or operation of the project.

5.1 Explanation of Impacts

The introduction to this chapter should provide an overview of the environmental analysis including a list of the subject areas included within the chapter and an explanation of the types of impacts that could occur.

5.1.1 Explanation of Cumulative Impacts

There shall be an explanation of the cumulative impacts analysis as required by CEQA Guidelines §15130(a) and identification of whether the cumulative analysis is based on (a) a list of past, present, and “probable future projects” producing related or cumulative impacts, regardless of whether they are under the same jurisdiction as the lead agency; or (b) a summary of projections contained in the General Plan or related planning document, or in a prior environmental document which has been adopted or certified, which described or evaluated regional or area wide conditions contributing to the cumulative impact as required pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15130(b). If utilizing the list of projects methodology, a cumulative development location map and list of projects shall be included. Thereafter, the specific analysis of cumulative impacts is included within each individual section.

5.2 Subject Area Analysis

Subject areas generally follow the order as shown in the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G; however, the applicant/consultant can consult with staff to determine the best order as prescribed by the project. Each subject area analysis must include a discussion as detailed in the following subsections.

5.2.1 Existing Conditions

This section describes the relevant existing environmental conditions only in the detail necessary to enable the reader to understand the following discussion of significant effects associated with the subject area. For example, aesthetics would include a visual account of the project site and surrounding area, scenic vistas or scenic resources in proximity, and potential sources of light and glare.

5.2.2 Applicable Regulatory Requirements

This section includes a discussion of federal, state and local regulations that apply to the project site or project, relative to the subject area. Local regulations should include relevant portions of the General Plan and Municipal Code.

5.2.3 Methodologies for Determining Impacts

This section includes an explanation of how impacts are measured or determined. It could include modeling, Geographic Information Systems search, site visit, or any other means usually relied upon to determine a level or measure of impact.

5.2.4 Basis for Determining Significance

This section cites the thresholds used to determine significance along with its sources and an explanation of its application.

5.2.5 Impact Analysis

This section applies the methods that were used to evaluate the resource and any effects that will occur as a result of project implementation as it relates to the threshold. Each threshold is reiterated and the analysis identifies impacts as either direct or indirect, and either short- or long-term. A final statement of significance is included at the end of each analysis.

5.2.6 Cumulative Analysis

This section provides an analysis of cumulative impacts based on the method of analysis previously disclosed (list of projects or projection method).

5.2.7 Significance of Impacts before Mitigation

This section reiterates the final conclusions reached related to whether a significant impact would occur.

5.2.8 Mitigation

This section proposes mitigation measures that would reduce any identified significant impacts. If no impacts are identified this section may state, "No mitigation is required."

5.2.9 Significance of Impacts after Mitigation

This section summarizes the application of the proposed mitigation with an explanation of how/why the proposed measure would (or would not) reduce significant impacts to less than significant levels. If no mitigation is required, this section does not need to be included.

Section 6 CEQA Mandated Analysis (Chapter 5.0)

This chapter of the EIR includes other mandated analysis including whether there would be significant environmental effects of a project which cannot be avoided if the proposed project is implemented (CEQA Guidelines §15126(b)), significant, irreversible

environmental changes that would be involved in the proposed action should it be implemented (CEQA Guidelines §15126.2(c)), and ways in which the proposed project could be growth inducing CEQA Guidelines §15126.2(d).

Additionally, this chapter of the EIR includes a discussion of those effects found not to be significant as part of the Initial Study process (CEQA Guidelines §15128).

Section 7 Project Alternatives (Chapter 6.0)

This chapter of the EIR is intended to implement the requirements set forth in CEQA Guidelines §15126.6. Organization of the Alternatives Chapter is described in the following sections.

7.1 Introduction and Explanation of Alternative Selection

The introduction to the Project Alternatives chapter includes an explanation for the inclusion of project alternatives, identifying any environmental effect previously discussed in Chapter 4.0 that cannot be mitigated to below a level of significance after the implementation of project design features, mandatory regulatory requirements, and feasible mitigation measures. The chapter provides a list and summary of those alternatives selected which represent the CEQA mandated reasonable range of alternatives.

7.2 Alternative Sites

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15126.6(f)(1), the EIR must identify any alternative project sites that were considered and why they were rejected. If no alternative sites were selected, this section must briefly explain why none were included. Factors that may be taken into account when addressing feasibility of alternatives are site suitability, economic viability, availability of infrastructure, whether the proponent can reasonably acquire, control or otherwise have access to the alternative site.

7.3 Alternative Analysis

This section provides the comparative discussion of potential impacts that would result from implementation of the alternatives as compared to the project. A table showing a comparison of impacts for each alternative, including the proposed project must be included.

Section 8 EIR References (Chapter 7.0)

EIR references must include a list of all persons who assisted in the preparation of the document, all documents incorporated by reference and all documents and websites referenced throughout the EIR.

8.1 Persons Involved in the Preparation of the EIR

This list must clearly identify: (1) all staff, agencies, and organizations who prepared the EIR; and (2) all Federal, State, or local agencies, organizations, and individuals who were consulted during its preparation. The list must indicate the name, affiliation, and a very brief explanation of each individual's role in the preparation of the EIR (CEQA Guidelines §15129.)

8.2 Documents Incorporated by Reference

This list identifies reports, studies, and supporting documentation used in the preparation of the EIR and incorporated by reference within the EIR. This section includes a statement indicating that a copy of the referenced reports, studies, and supporting documentation is a matter of public record and is generally available to the public at a specific location to be referenced in the document.

8.3 Documents and Websites Consulted

This list must provide adequate references to documents cited in the EIR. References that were heavily relied upon in the EIR analysis and which have a limited circulation must include a location where the public can readily access and review the document (CEQA Guidelines §15150).