

1. INTRODUCTION

This document is an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA), as amended. The Town of Corte Madera is the lead agency for the project evaluated in this EIR.

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Reneson Hotels Inc., the project applicant, proposes the demolition of an existing hotel building and restaurant and the construction of a new 187-room hotel (the project) on the 5.47-acre Best Western Corte Madera Inn site (the project site) at 56 Madera Boulevard in Corte Madera. No restaurant would be provided on the project site, and the project would result in a net gain of 77 hotel rooms. The primary access to the site would be from a single, relocated driveway on Madera Boulevard near a U.S. Highway 101 off-ramp.

As part of the project, the existing 0.64-acre pond located at the northeastern edge of the site would be filled. New landscaping would be added throughout the site concentrated near the building and around the perimeter of the property. The perimeter would also include surface parking.

The project would require a General Plan amendment and a rezoning to allow the proposed floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.55.¹ The General Plan amendment would change the Town of Corte Madera General Plan land use designation of the site from “Mixed-Use Commercial,” which allows a maximum FAR of 0.34, to “Motel/Hotel Highway Commercial.” This would be an entirely new General Plan designation for the Town. The rezoning would change the zoning of the site from C-3 Highway Commercial with a Baylands Risk Zone and Natural Habitat Special Purpose Overlay to Motel/Hotel Highway Commercial with an FAR limit of 0.55 and the same Baylands Risk Zone and Natural Habitat Special Purpose Overlay. This would be an entirely new zoning designation for the Town. The project would also be subject to a Conditional Use Permit, which is required for all hotel projects. Design review, Preliminary Development Plan, and Precise Development Plan approvals would also be required prior to the issuance of any grading or building permits.

1.2 PUBLIC REVIEW

This Draft EIR will be circulated for review and comment by the public and other interested parties, agencies, and organizations for a 45-day period as indicated on the Public Notice of Availability of this document.² During the public review period, written comments on the adequacy of the Draft EIR may be submitted to:

¹ Floor area ratio refers to the ratio of square footage of building area to the size of the site. Therefore, an FAR of 0.34 on a 1-acre site (43,560 square feet) would allow a building square footage of 14,810 square feet.

² Due to the holiday period, a review period of about 52 days is being provided.

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Responses to all substantive comments received on the adequacy of the Draft EIR and submitted within the specified review period will be prepared and included in the Responses to Comments/ Final EIR. Prior to approval of the project, the Town of Corte Madera Planning Commission must certify the Final EIR and adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) for mitigation measures identified in the EIR, in accordance with the requirements of California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21001.

1.3 ORGANIZATION OF THE EIR

This Draft EIR is organized into the following chapters:

Chapter 1, Introduction: Provides an introduction and overview that describes the intended use of this EIR, project background, the EIR process, and organization of the document.

Chapter 2, Summary: Briefly describes the project and concerns associated with it, identifies levels of significance for each impact addressed in the EIR, summarizes the project-specific effects of the project, identifies mitigation measures, and compares impacts of the project with those of alternatives to the project.

Chapter 3, Project Description: Contains information on the project site, project objectives, and project characteristics.

Chapter 4, Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures: Contains an analysis of environmental topics. Each topic is addressed in a separate section. Each section is divided into an *Introduction* that describes the general content and approach used for the topic; an *Environmental Setting* section that describes baseline environmental information; a *Regulatory Framework* section that describes federal, state, and local regulations applicable to the topic; and an *Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures* section that describes project-specific impacts and mitigation measures, along with cumulative impacts.

Chapter 5, Alternatives: Assesses impacts of three alternatives to the project, including a No Project Alternative as required by CEQA. The alternatives are compared to the proposed project and an “Environmentally Superior Alternative” is identified.

Chapter 6, CEQA Considerations: Contains sections required by CEQA, including a discussion of cumulative impacts, growth inducement, and significant unavoidable impacts.

Chapter 7, EIR Authors: Lists the persons directly involved in preparing this report.

Chapter 8, References: Lists the persons, agencies, and organizations contacted and documents used during preparation of this report.

1.4 NOTICE OF PREPARATION

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) was prepared by the Town of Corte Madera to obtain comments from agencies and the public regarding issues to be addressed in the EIR. The Notice of Preparation can be viewed on the Town's website at the following address:
http://tcmmail.org/planning/NoticeOfPreparation-CM%20Inn%20FINAL_ASC.pdf .

Copies of the comments received in response to the NOP are included in **Appendix A** of this EIR.

A scoping meeting was also held in which the project and CEQA process were explained and members of the public were allowed to comment on the CEQA issues of concern. This meeting was held on May 22, 2014 at Corte Madera Town Hall. A summary of comments from the scoping meeting can be found in **Appendix C** of this EIR.

This EIR was prepared based on the comments received on the NOP and the project information provided. The following topics were found to have potential environmental impacts and thus are addressed herein in this EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Public Services (including Recreation)
- Transportation/Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Energy

The topics of agriculture and forestry resources, mineral resources, and population/housing were scoped out of the analysis as these topics did not apply to the project.

1.5 REFERENCES

State of California, 2013. CEQA Guidelines, Public Resources Code Sections 21000 to 21189.3, as amended January 1.

