

## 3.16 WILDFIRE

This section evaluates potential wildfire hazards impacts that may result from the implementation of the Project by identifying existing wildfire hazard conditions of the Project Site and surrounding area; considering applicable Federal, State, regional and local goals and policies; identifying and analyzing environmental impacts; and recommending measures to minimize or avoid potential adverse impacts resultant of Project implementation.

Information presented in this wildfire hazards impact analysis is derived largely from the City of Beaumont Annex – Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) prepared by Richard H. Cook (2012)<sup>1</sup>, County of Riverside Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJLHMP) (2018)<sup>2</sup>, and City of Beaumont General Plan (Beaumont GP) – Safety Element.<sup>3</sup> Other information in this section, such as regulatory framework, is derived from the various planning documents including the County of Riverside General Plan (County GP), Beaumont GP, City of Beaumont Municipal Code (Beaumont MC), and pertinent State of California Building Codes (CBC).

### 3.16.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

#### EXISTING CONDITIONS

In general, wildfires pose the greatest risk in the open space and undeveloped portions of the City. The severity of potential wildfires is influenced by four factors: vegetation, climate, slope, and how the fire was started. In the southern and western portions of the City, the vegetation is comprised of native chamise chaparral, California scrub oak, white sage, and manzanita. Sparse vegetation of canyon and live oak can be found also. The grasslands, shrubs, and chaparral in both the flat and hilly areas are considered to be highly flammable. The amount and concentration of vegetation available is defined as the “fuel load.” Light fuel loads typically consist of flammable grasses and annual herbs; medium fuels are brush and shrubs less than six feet in height; and heavy fuel loads consist of heavier brush and timber over six feet high. The majority of the fuel loads in the City are characterized as light fuels with some medium fuels in the southern and western portions of the City.<sup>4</sup>

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) has mapped areas of significant fire hazards in the State through its Fire and Resources Assessment Program (FRAP). These maps place areas of the State into different Fire Hazard Safety Zones (FHSZs) based on a hazard scoring system using subjective criteria for fuels, fire history, terrain influences, housing density, and occurrence of severe fire weather where urban conflagration could result in catastrophic losses. As part of this mapping system, land where CAL FIRE is responsible for wildland fire protection and generally located in unincorporated areas is classified as a State Responsibility Area (SRA). Where local fire protection agencies, such as the

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<sup>1</sup> City of Beaumont. 2012. Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. <http://beaumontca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/29599/Beaumont-LHMP-?bidId=> (accessed November 2021).

<sup>2</sup> County of Riverside. 2018. Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. [https://www.rivcoemd.org/Portals/0/FINAL%20PUBLIC%20VERSION%20Riv\\_Co\\_%202018%20Multi%20Jurisdictional%20Local%20Hazard%20Mitigation%20Plan.pdf](https://www.rivcoemd.org/Portals/0/FINAL%20PUBLIC%20VERSION%20Riv_Co_%202018%20Multi%20Jurisdictional%20Local%20Hazard%20Mitigation%20Plan.pdf) (accessed November 2021).

<sup>3</sup> City of Beaumont. 2020. Beaumont General Plan. [https://www.beaumontca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/36923/Beaumont-GPU\\_Final-rev-22521](https://www.beaumontca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/36923/Beaumont-GPU_Final-rev-22521) (accessed November 2021).

<sup>4</sup> City of Beaumont. 2020. Beaumont General Plan Draft PEIR SCH No. 2018031022. <https://www.beaumontca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/36627/DEIR-090720> (accessed November 2021).

Riverside County Fire Department (RCFD), are responsible for wildfire protection, the land is classified as a Local Responsibility Area (LRA). CAL FIRE currently identifies Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 424-010-020 as a LRA and APNs 424-010-009 and 424-010-010 as a SRA.<sup>5</sup> In addition to establishing local or State responsibility for wildfire protection in a specific area, CAL FIRE designates areas as very high FHSZs (VHFHSZ), High (HFHSZ), and Moderate (MFHSZ). According to the State of California Fire Hazard Severity Zone viewer, the northerly portion of Project Site is within the LRA is designated as a VHFHSZ. The southerly parcels within the SRA area designated as HFHSZ's. The adjoining areas to the south and east of the Project Site are designated as HFHSZ, and a small portion to the west is MFHSZ with the balance being a HFHSZ. It should be noted that RCFD and CAL FIRE have contracted with the City to provide fire protection services since 1978<sup>6</sup>; and therefore, both currently provide services to the Project Site (State of California, 2020).

### Wildfire Characteristics

According to the National Park Service (NPS), a wildfire, or wildland fire, is described as a non-structure fire that occurs in vegetation such as trees, grasses, and shrubs, and is not a prescribed fire.<sup>7</sup> Wildfires have differing causes including lightning strikes, wind-blown embers, but are most commonly caused by human activities. Wildfires may originate in undeveloped areas and spread to developed or urban areas where the landscape and structures are not designed and maintained to be ignition or fire resistant. The International Association of Fire Chiefs' Ready, Set, Go! website defines a Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) as an area where homes are built near or among lands prone to wildland fire.<sup>8</sup> The potential for wildland fires represents a hazard where development is adjacent to open space or in proximity to wildland fuels or FHSZ. Fires that occur in WUI areas may affect natural resources as well as life and property.

The potential for wildfires to affect an area are largely dependent on vegetation patterns within a given areas and the density of the vegetative growth. The vegetation is typically defined as having low, moderate, or high fuel loads. Light fuels typically consist of flammable grasses and annual herbs; medium fuels are brush and shrubs less than six feet in height; and heavy fuels are heavier brush and timber over six feet high. Topography also influences fire risk by affecting fire spread rates. Steep terrain can result in faster fire spread upslope and terrain that create funneling effects, such as canyons, and these landscapes can result in especially intense fire behavior. Conversely, flat terrain or those with slight elevation changes tend to have little effect on fire spread. In these instances, the fire spread is largely driven by vegetation and weather conditions such as humidity and wind.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> CAL FIRE. ND. *FHSZ Viewer*. <https://egis.fire.ca.gov/FHSZ/> (accessed November 2021).

<sup>6</sup> City of Beaumont. ND. *Fire Services*. <http://beaumontca.gov/Index.aspx?NID=18> (accessed May 2019).

<sup>7</sup> National Park Service. 2018. *Types of Wildland Fire*. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/fire/types-of-wildland-fire.htm> (accessed November 2019).

<sup>8</sup> IAFC. 2021. *What is the Wildland-Urban Interface?* [https://www.wildlandfirersg.org/s/iafc2/what-is-the-wildland-urban-interface-20Y3m0000004Ee8EAE?language=en\\_US](https://www.wildlandfirersg.org/s/iafc2/what-is-the-wildland-urban-interface-20Y3m0000004Ee8EAE?language=en_US) (accessed November 2021).

<sup>9</sup> City of Beaumont. 2012. *City of Beaumont Annex – Local Hazard Mitigation Plan*. <http://beaumontca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/29599> (accessed May 2019).

## 3.16.2 REGULATORY SETTING

### FEDERAL

#### Federal Emergency Management Act (FEMA)

In March 2003, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.

#### Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000

This Act (42 United States Code [USC] § 5121) was signed into law to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief Act of 1988 (42 USC §§ 5121-5207). Among other things, this legislation reinforces the importance of pre-disaster infrastructure mitigation planning to reduce disaster losses nationwide and is aimed primarily at the control and streamlining of the administration of federal disaster relief and programs to promote mitigation activities. Some of the major provisions of this Act include:

- i) Funding pre-disaster mitigation activities;
- ii) Developing experimental multi-hazard maps to better understand risk;
- iii) Establishing state and local government infrastructure mitigation planning requirements;
- iv) Defining how states can assume more responsibility in managing the hazard mitigation grant program; and
- v) Adjusting ways in which management costs for projects are funded.

The mitigation planning provisions outlined in § 322 of this Act establish performance-based standards for mitigation plans and require states to have a public assistance program (Advance Infrastructure Mitigation [AIM]) to develop county government plans. The consequence for counties that fail to develop an infrastructure mitigation plan is the chance of a reduced federal share of damage assistance from 75 percent to 25 percent if the facility has been damaged on more than one occasion in the preceding 10-year period by the same type of event.

### STATE

#### California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

CAL FIRE protects the people of California from fires, responds to emergencies, and protects and enhances forest, range, and watershed values providing social, economic, and environmental benefits to rural and urban citizens. Another major responsibility of CAL FIRE is to use their firefighters, fire engines, and aircraft to respond to wildland fires. In 2019 (between January 1 and December 29) there were a total of 6,592 wildfires in the State (CAL FIRE, 2019).

The Office of the State Fire Marshal supports CAL FIRE's mission by focusing on fire prevention. It provides support through a wide variety of fire safety responsibilities including by regulating buildings in which people live, congregate, or are confined; by controlling substances and products which may, in and of themselves, or by their misuse, cause injuries, death, and destruction by fire; by providing Statewide direction for fire prevention in wildland areas; by regulating hazardous liquid pipelines; by reviewing regulations and building standards; and by providing training and education in fire protection methods and responsibilities.

### **State Fire Regulations**

Fire regulations for California are established in §§ 13000 et seq. of the California Health and Services Code (HSC) and include regulations for structural standards (similar to those identified in the CBC); fire protection and public notification systems; fire protection devices such as extinguishers and smoke alarms; standards for high-rise structures and childcare facilities; and fire suppression training. The State Fire Marshal is responsible for enforcement of these established regulations and building standards for all state-owned buildings, state-occupied buildings, and state institutions within California.

### **California Fire Plan**

The California Fire Plan is a cooperative effort between the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. By placing the emphasis on what needs to be done long before a fire starts, the Fire Plan looks to reduce firefighting costs and property losses, increase firefighter safety, and to contribute to ecosystem health. The current plan was finalized in early 2010.

### **California Public Resources Code (PRC) 4290 and 4291**

These statutes, which establish minimum fire safety standards related to defensible space, apply to the perimeters and access to all commercial, industrial, and residential buildings constructed with an SRA (approved after January 1, 1991), and within lands classified and designated as VHFHSZ (after July 1, 2021). The person(s) who control, lease, maintain, operate, or own said building in, upon, or adjoining a mountainous area, forest-covered lands, brush-covered lands, grass-covered lands, or land that is covered with flammable materials is required to preserve a defensible space of 100 feet from the perimeter of the building. This is done through the following:

1. Road standards for fire equipment access.
2. Standards for signs identifying streets, roads, and buildings.
3. Minimum private water supply reserves for emergency fire use.
4. Fuel breaks and greenbelts.

These regulations do not supersede local regulations which equal or exceed minimum regulations adopted by the state.

## **California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 14 SRA Fire Safe Regulations**

These regulations establish minimum wildfire protection standards in conjunction with building, construction, and development in a SRA. The future design and construction of structures, subdivisions and developments in an SRA shall provide for basic emergency access and perimeter wildfire protection measures. These measures shall provide for emergency access; signing and building numbering; private water supply reserves for emergency fire use; and vegetation modification.

### **California Government Code § 66474.02**

This statute states that before a county can approve a tentative map, or a parcel map for which a tentative map was not required, for an area (development) located in an SRA or a VHFHSZ, the following findings must be made:

1. A finding supported by substantial evidence in the record that the subdivision is consistent with regulations adopted by the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection pursuant to §§ 4290 and 4291 of the PRC or consistent with local ordinances certified by the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection as meeting or exceeding the state regulations.
2. A finding supported by substantial evidence in the record that structural fire protection and suppression services will be available for the subdivision through any of the following entities:
  - A. A county, city, special district, political subdivision of the state, or another entity organized solely to provide fire protection services that is monitored and funded by a county or other public entity.
  - B. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection by contract entered into pursuant to §§ 4133, 4142, or 4144 of the PRC.

Upon approving a tentative map, or a parcel map for which a tentative map was not required, for an area (development) located in a SRA or VHFHSZ, the county shall transmit a copy of the findings and accompanying maps to the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection.

### **California Building Code, Chapter 7A**

Chapter 7A of the CBC focuses primarily on preventing ember penetration into homes, a leading cause of structure loss from wildfires. These codes have been developed through decades of after fire structure “save” and “loss” evaluations to determine what causes buildings to ignite or avoid ignition during wildfires. The resulting fire codes now focus on mitigating former structural vulnerabilities through construction techniques and materials so that the buildings are resistant to ignitions from direct flames, heat, and embers, as indicated in the CBC (Chapter 7A, Section 701A Scope, Purpose and Application).

### **California Fire Code, Chapter 49 Requirements for WUI Fire Areas**

This code provides minimum standards to increase the ability of a building or structure to resist the intrusion of flame or burning embers being projected by a vegetation fire and contributes to a systematic reduction in fire losses through the use of performance and prescriptive requirements. Buildings and structures located on unincorporated land designated as an SRA Moderate, High, and VHFHSZ and land

designated as VHFHSZ by a city or other local agency shall maintain the required hazardous vegetation and fuel management standards.

Fire hazard designations are based on topography, vegetation, and weather, amongst other factors with more hazardous sites including steep terrain, unmaintained fuels/vegetation, and WUI locations. Projects situated in High FHSZ's require fire hazard analysis and application of fire protection measures that have been developed to specifically result in defensible communities in these WUI locations. The Project Site would meet all applicable code requirements for building in higher fire hazard areas, or meet the intent of the code through the application of site-specific fire protection measures.

### **California Fire Code**

CCR Title 24, Part 9 (California Fire Code) contains regulations relating to construction and maintenance of buildings, the use of premises, and the management of WUI areas, among other issues. The California Fire Code is updated every three years by the California Building Standards Commission and was last updated in 2019 (effective January 1, 2020). The Fire Code sets forth regulations regarding building standards, fire protection and notification systems, fire protection devices such as fire extinguishers and smoke alarms, high-rise building standards, and fire suppression training. It contains regulations relating to construction, maintenance, and use of buildings. Topics addressed in the code also include fire department access, fire hydrants, automatic sprinkler systems, fire alarm systems, fire and explosion hazards safety, hazardous materials storage and use, provisions intended to protect and assist fire responders, industrial processes, and many other general and specialized fire-safety requirements for new and existing buildings and the surrounding premises. Development under the Project would be subject to applicable regulations of the California Fire Code.

### **Title 8 California Code of Regulations Sections 1270 and 6773**

In accordance with CCR, Title 8 §1270 "Fire Prevention" and § 6773 "Fire Protection and Fire Equipment," the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal-OSHA) has established minimum standards for fire suppression and emergency medical services. The standards include, but are not limited to, guidelines on the handling of highly combustible materials, fire hose sizing requirements, restrictions on the use of compressed air, access roads, and the testing, maintenance, and use of all firefighting and emergency medical equipment.

### **California Building Standards Code**

California building standards are published in the CCR, Title 24, also known as the California Building Standards Code (CBSC). The CBSC, which applies to all applications for building permits, consists of 12 parts that contain administrative regulations for the California Building Standards Commission and for all state agencies that implement or enforce building standards. Local agencies must ensure the development complies with the guidelines contained in the CBSC. Cities and counties can adopt additional building standards beyond the CBSC including the CBSC Part 2, named the CBC which is based upon the 2018 International Building Code, and Part 11, named the California Green Building Standards Code, also called the CalGreen Code.

## **California Health and Safety Code (HSC)**

State fire regulations are set forth in California HSC §13000 et seq., and include provisions concerning building standards, fire protection and notification systems, fire protection devices, and fire suppression training, as also set forth in the 2019 CBSC and related updated codes.

## **Emergency Mutual Aid Agreements (EMAA)**

The EMMA system is a collaborative effort between city and county emergency managers in the Office of Emergency Services (OES) in the coastal, southern, and inland regions of the State. EMMA provides service in the emergency response and recovery efforts at the Southern Regional Emergency Operations Center (REOC), local Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs), the Disaster Field Office (DFO), and community service centers. The purpose of EMMA is to support disaster operations in affected jurisdictions by providing professional emergency management personnel. In accordance with the EMMA, local and state emergency managers have responded in support of each other under a variety of plans and procedures.

## **California Governor's Office of Emergency Management Agency (Cal-EMA)**

In 2009, the State of California passed legislation creating the Cal-EMA and authorizing it to prepare a Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) program (Title 19 CCR § 2400 *et seq.*), which sets forth measures by which a jurisdiction should handle emergency disasters. Non-compliance with SEMS could result in the state withholding disaster relief from the non-complying jurisdiction in the event of an emergency disaster.

Cal-EMA serves as the lead state agency for emergency management in the state. Cal-EMA coordinates the state response to major emergencies in support of local government. The primary responsibility for emergency management resides with local government. Local jurisdictions first use their own resources and, as these are exhausted, obtain more from neighboring cities and special districts, the county in which they are located, and other counties throughout the state through the statewide mutual aid system. In California, the SEMS provides the mechanism by which local government requests assistance. Cal-EMA serves as the lead agency for mobilizing the state's resources and obtaining federal resources; it also maintains oversight of the state's mutual aid system.

## **LOCAL**

### **Riverside County Fire Department**

The RCFD, in coordination with CAL FIRE, provides fire and emergency services to all unincorporated areas of Riverside County and 21 partner cities within the County. RCFD is equipped for fire prevention and detention support from both the ground through its 101 stations, but also from the air through the Ryan Air Attack Base at the Hemet Ryan Airport. Through the County Fire Marshall, RCFD also analyzes and inspects construction development both in their planning and construction phases.

### **County of Riverside Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP)**

The LHMP aims to lessen the effect of a disaster by recognizing hazards and developing ways to reduce their impact. Risk assessments rate hazards with the highest potential impact to the community. In

addition, long-term prevention or protection steps are developed to lessen the impact of the hazard. The LHMP creates awareness of hazards, threats, and susceptibilities within the community, and paves a path forward for jurisdictions to prepare for local disasters. Plan objectives include:

- Reduce loss of life and injuries;
- Reduce hazard related property losses;
- Protect the environment;
- Coordinate disaster planning and integrate public policy; and
- Improve community and agency knowledge and education of hazards.

## City of Beaumont General Plan

### *Safety Element*

The Safety Element identifies the City's policies relative to the mitigation of natural and man-made hazards as a means to improve the safety of its citizens. This Element complies with the State requirements for a safety element. Relevant goals are listed below and Project consistency with these goals is discussed in **Table 3.10-3: Beaumont General Plan Consistency Analysis** of this EIR:

#### **Goal 9.5A**      ***City with enhanced fire and emergency response services.***

Policy 9.5.6      Provide fire suppression water system guidelines and implementation plans for existing and acquired lands, including fire protection water volumes, system distribution upgrades, and emergency water storage.

#### **Goal 9.6A**      ***City that protects human life, land, and property from the effects of wildland fire hazards.***

Policy 9.6.3      Ensure that development in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones minimizes the risks of wildfire through planning and design of structures in accordance with the California Building Code Chapter 7A. Ensure adequate provisions for vegetation management, emergency access, and firefighting.

Policy 9.6.4      Require new development in the High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones to develop a fire protection and evacuation plan and ensure that the plan includes adequate fire access to new development.

Policy 9.6.6      Require property owners to clear brush and high fuel vegetation and maintain firesafe zones (a minimum distance of 30 feet from the structure or to the property line, whichever is closer) to reduce the risk of fires. For structures located within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, the required brush distance is up to 200 feet from structures up to their property line.

Policy 9.6.8      Require that developments located in wildland interface areas incorporate and enforce standards for construction, including a fuel modification program (i.e., brush clearance, planting of fire-retardant vegetation) to reduce the threat of wildfires. Fuel modification



areas shall be located within the project site and shall be clearly delineated on grading plans.

### **City of Beaumont Annex – Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (2012)**

The City of Beaumont hazard mitigation planning team has identified a list of Mitigation Strategies and Goals for potentially hazardous issues identified throughout the City. The City also asked for input from local community groups (via the Emergency Services Department) identifying potential hazards in their areas. The City's Goals and Objectives are listed below:

**Goal 1: Provide for the Protection of People’s Lives from all hazards, this includes individuals living in the City's sphere of influence.**

*Objective 1.1:* Ensure proper notification and direction is completed in a timely manner for the citizens of Beaumont and its sphere of influence, of imminent and potential hazards. Utilization of the City's Reverse 911 System, the Emergency Alert System or by loud speaker via city emergency response vehicles.

**Goal 3: Continue Public awareness training and understanding of potential hazards.**

*Objective 3.1:* Increase Community Emergency Response (CERT) training programs as demand dictates.

*Objective 3.3:* Continue to provide emergency preparedness presentations to home owner groups, community services groups and the Beaumont Unified School District.

*Objective 3.4:* Establish procedures to ensure that local community, service groups and employees are aware of changes identified by DHS/FEMA, (i.e., National Incident Management System (NIMS), Disaster Mitigation Act (DMA) and local City Emergency Response Plans).

### **City of Beaumont Municipal Code**

Chapter 15.20, § 010 relates to the adoption of the 2019 California Fire Code. This Section states, “Except as otherwise provided in this Chapter, the California Fire Code, Title 24, California Code of Regulations, Part 9, including Chapter 1, Division II - Scope and Administration, except that Section 103.2 and 109.3 are not adopted, and Chapters 3, 25, and § 403.12, 503, 510.2, and 1103.2 are adopted, including any and all amendments set forth in this Chapter, and including any and all amendments thereto that may hereafter be made and adopted by the State of California, is hereby adopted as the City Fire Code.” More specifically, subsection Q of the MC recognizes that FHSZs and maps as defined in the California Fire Code includes § 4904 and the revision related to Government Code §§ 51175 through 51189 for VHFHSZs and that these resources are retained on file at the office of the Fire Chief.

MC § 17.06.030 relates to water efficient landscape requirements and discusses plant selection for projects in high fire hazard areas and that a defensible space or zone around a building or structure is required pursuant to PRC § 4291 and Riverside County Ordinance No. 695. Fire-prone plant materials and highly flammable mulches are required to be avoided to address fire safety and prevention.

## City of Beaumont Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP)

The purpose of the LHMP is to identify the City's hazards, review and assess past disaster occurrences, estimate the probability of future occurrences and set goals to mitigate potential risks to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from natural and man-made hazards.

The LHMP was prepared pursuant to the requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 to achieve eligibility and potentially secure mitigation funding through FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance, Pre-Disaster Mitigation, and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs. City of Beaumont Annex LHMP identifies city-specific hazards and provides adequate recommendations to mitigate those hazards with available resources through future planning and evaluation of existing plans.

### 3.16.3 STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G contains the Environmental Checklist Form, which includes questions concerning wildfire. The questions presented in the Environmental Checklist Form have been utilized as significance criteria in this section. If the Project is located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the Project:

- a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan
- b) Exacerbate wildfire risks due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of wildfire
- c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment
- d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

## METHODOLOGY AND ASSUMPTIONS

The Project is evaluated against the aforementioned significance criteria/thresholds, as the basis for determining the impact's level of significance concerning wildfire hazards. This analysis considers the existing regulatory framework (i.e., laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards) that avoid or reduce the potentially significant environmental impact. Where significant impacts remain despite compliance with the regulatory framework, feasible mitigation measures are recommended, to avoid or reduce the Project's potentially significant environmental impacts.

## APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

This analysis of impacts from wildfire hazards examines the Project's temporary (i.e., construction) and permanent (i.e., operational) effects based on application of the significance criteria/thresholds outlined above. For each criterion, the analyses are generally divided into two main categories: (1) temporary impacts; and (2) permanent impacts. Each criterion is discussed in the context of Project components that share similar characteristics/geography. The impact conclusions consider the potential for changes in

environmental conditions, as well as compliance with the regulatory framework enacted to protect the environment.

The baseline conditions and impact analyses are based on reviews of Project Site maps and drawings; analysis of aerial and ground-level photographs; and review of various data available in public records, including local planning documents. The determination that a Project component would or would not result in “substantial” adverse effects on wildfire hazards standards considers the available policies and regulations established by local and regional agencies and the amount of deviation from these policies in the Project’s components.

### 3.16.4 PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

***Impact 3.16-1: If located in or near SRA or lands classified as Very High FHSZ, would the Project substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?***

***Level of Significance: Less than Significant Impact***

The Project is currently in both an LRA and SRA for fire protection. As previously stated, upon annexation of APN 010-424-009, the entire Project Site would be an LRA. Because the City currently contracts with CAL FIRE and RCFD for fire services, annexation of the parcel would not affect fire services as CAL FIRE and RCFD would both continue to provide fire services.

The County’s planning process, as it does for the Project, follows methodologies consistent with FEMA and Cal-EMA guidance. This process includes conducting meetings with the Operational Area Planning Committee (OAPC) coordinated with the RCFD, Office of Emergency Services, and ensuring compliance with all other applicable regulations set forth by Federal, State, and local jurisdictions related to evacuation and safety from fire hazards. It should be noted that the City of Beaumont also recognizes other potential hazards and threats that could occur from earthquakes, flooding, and hazardous materials. Because of this, the City is prepared on numerous fronts to implement an evacuation should it be needed, in accordance with the LHMP.<sup>10</sup>

The City’s LHMP has identified routes near the Project Site that would serve as emergency evacuation routes: State Route 60 (SR-60), Interstate 10 (I-10), Beaumont Avenue (Highway 79), and 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Additionally, the City uses a Reverse 911 Emergency Notification System which is managed by the City’s Police Department Dispatch Center. This system allows the City to get information to residents if any emergency event may happen in the area. An evacuation, should it be necessary, would be coordinated by the Beaumont Police Department, California Highway Patrol, and other cooperating law enforcement agencies that have primary responsibility for evacuations. These agencies work closely with responding fire department personnel who assess fire behavior and spread, which ultimately influence evacuation decisions.

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<sup>10</sup> City of Beaumont. 2012. *City of Beaumont Annex – Local Hazard Mitigation Plan*. <http://beaumontca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/29599> (accessed May 2019).

Therefore, while construction and operation of the Project would occur within proximity to SR-60 and I-10, neither construction nor operation of the Project would impede the use of either of the freeways or local roadways needed to access them. Impacts would be less than significant, and mitigation is not required.

***Impact 3.16-2: If located in or near SRA or lands classified as Very High FHSZ, would the Project, exacerbate wildlife risks due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, and thereby expose Project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?***

***Level of Significance: Less than Significant Impact***

The northerly portion of the Project Site is located within an LRA and are designated as VHFHSZ. The southerly Project areas are within a SRA and are designated as HFHSZ. The entire Project area is provided fire protection services by both CAL FIRE and RCFD. Upon annexation of the current County areas, the City of Beaumont would provide structural fire protection and medical emergency response, while both CAL FIRE and RCFD would be likely to provide further assistance should wildland fire protection be needed through mutual aid agreements. As discussed above, the areas surrounding the Project Site are designated as either HFHSZ or MFHSZ.

The majority of the existing fuel loads on the Warehouse Site and remainder of the area that would be annexed but not developed as part of this Project are light to medium density fuel loads. These areas have scrub habitat on the ridges and predominantly non-native grasses in the lower lying valley areas. The area to the north of the Warehouse Site is dominated by non-native grasslands. To the west there is a triangular undeveloped area that is approximately 15 acres in size. The area has existing paved and unpaved roads and the vegetation consists of scrub habitat interspersed with trees. This area is bound by SR-60 to the north and a highly disturbed area that is being developed and devoid of native vegetation further west. The area to the south of the Warehouse Site is being developed and graded for the future 4<sup>th</sup> Street improvements, and the area beyond that within the area to be annexed consists of a highly disturbed construction staging area with the balance consisting of scrub habitat and non-native grasses. The area to the east of the Warehouse Site consists of ongoing improvements and grading for the Potrero Boulevard extension and further east the area is dominated by non-native grasslands. Because the undeveloped areas surrounding the Warehouse Site, as well as the balance of the annexation area, generally consists of light fuels such as grasses and scrub, with other areas being highly disturbed and undergoing development, the potential hazards from wildfire fire are considered to be low.

The Project's warehouse would be constructed as a concrete tilt-up facility, built with appropriate setbacks from adjacent undeveloped areas that could be prone to wildfires. The areas along the outside margins of the Warehouse Site would have landscaping and interior paved access roads needed for vehicle movements and emergency vehicle access. These areas would provide setbacks from the surrounding undeveloped areas and establish defensible space. In addition, the Warehouse Site would be bound by 4<sup>th</sup> Street to the south and Potrero Boulevard to the east. The Project's concrete construction and setbacks would improve the Project's fire resistance and create defensible space.

In addition, conformance with the California Building Code and California Fire Code and the City's development review and permitting process, the City would ensure the Project does not exacerbate the risks of wildfire risks due to slope, prevailing winds, or other factors that would expose occupants to a greater risk from wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of wildfire. Impacts in this regard would be less than significant and mitigation is not required.

**Mitigation Measures**

No mitigation is necessary.

***Impact 3.16-3: If located in or near SRA or lands classified as Very High FHSZ, would the Project require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?***

***Level of Significance: Less than Significant Impact***

The Project includes construction of an approximately 577,920-square foot “high-cube” industrial warehouse facility on the undeveloped lots adjacent to the future northwest corner of the 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Potrero Boulevard intersection. Portions of both adjacent roadways would be constructed as part of the Project in accordance with all City and design standards as part of planned improvements for the area. The Project does not include any interior roadways, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, or above ground power or utility lines that would exacerbate a fire hazard with their installation or in their operations. The extension of 4<sup>th</sup> Street similarly would not exacerbate fire hazard as the roadway improvement would increase accessibility to the Project Site while removing potential fuels. All improvements would occur within areas already planned for disturbance as part of the Project or within existing or planned roadways or within easements that have been previously disturbed. None of the Project improvements, including landscaping or installation of interior circulation driveways or emergency access lanes, would result in impacts to the environment not analyzed in the respective chapters of this EIR. Impacts in this regard would be less than significant and no additional impacts related to fire protection or wildfire would occur. No mitigation is required.

**Mitigation Measures**

No mitigation is necessary.

***Impact 3.16-4: If located in or near SRA or lands classified as Very High FHSZ, would the Project expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?***

***Level of Significance: Less than Significant Impact***

As discussed above, the Project does not contain steep slopes and is relatively flat with slight hills with flat tops and contains generally light fuel loads with some areas containing scrub habitat. Slopes can be an important factor relative to wildfire because steeper slopes can facilitate more rapid fire spread. No flooding risk would occur should a wildfire occur in the Project vicinity. No evidence of on-site landslides or debris flow was observed during field investigations or documented on the California Geologic Survey Landslide inventory. The risk of land sliding and rockfall is considered low for the Project Site and

surrounding locations as these areas do not have steep slopes or contain loose rock or debris. Additionally, the Project site is not located within a 100-year floodplain, but is in “Zone X,” which is areas determined to be outside of the 0.2 percent annual chance (500-year) floodplain. The potential for flooding on the Project Site including the Warehouse Site, therefore, is considered low.

Construction of the Project would alter the existing drainage pattern of the site through the development of new impervious surfaces, including the proposed warehouse building and surface parking improvements. The Project would alter the rate and amount of surface runoff because the existing site is generally undeveloped with few existing impervious surfaces. However, the Project would include stormwater improvements such as the creation of two retention basins (one basin on the north and southern property lines) and rerouting an existing drainage course to adequately convey stormwater through the Project site. In addition, the Project includes best management practices (BMPs) and low impact development to minimize run-off and maximize infiltration. These structures are designed to accommodate both existing drainage flows and potential drainage flow increases that would result from implementation of the Project.

The Project also would not introduce new slopes that would exacerbate existing hazards of wildfire. While the Project would include an approximate 26-foot retaining wall, among other smaller retaining walls, the walls would be located on the northerly side of the Warehouse Site and would be adjacent to non-native grasslands bound by SR-60 to further to the north, the Potrero Boulevard extension to the east, and the fragmented approximate 15 acre undeveloped area to the west. The risk of wildfire resulting in destabilization of the retaining wall is considered to be low because the wall would be surrounded by graded slopes with landscaped areas, and paved surfaces (including SR-60). The walls would not be in proximity to vegetation that would facilitate wildfires burning for an extended period of time resulting in a substantial amount of soil erosion around the retaining walls.

Therefore, due to the existing topography and low slopes both on the Project Site and surrounding areas as well as proposed drainage improvements, as well as impervious areas and landscaping incorporated into Project design, the Project would not substantially exacerbate risks with slope instability due to landslides or flooding if a wildfire should occur in these areas.

### **Mitigation Measures**

No mitigation is necessary.

### **3.16.5 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS**

No significant unavoidable wildfire impacts have been identified.

### **3.16.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

Projects have the potential to be cumulatively considerable when evaluated in the context of other past, present or reasonably foreseeable projects makes a cumulative contribution to impacts. Similar to the Project, cumulative development occurring within the vicinity and similar FHSZs would be subject to risk of wildfire hazards. Cumulative projects also would be subject to compliance with the California Building Code and California Fire Code, as well as local regulations and all proposed construction would be required

to meet minimum standards for fire safety. Development occurring within the City of Beaumont, or those future projects annexed from the County lands adjacent to and near the Project Site would be subject to review by the City and fire department to ensure cumulative development is designed to provide a minimum of fire safety and support fire suppression activities. This would include compliance with State and local fire codes, inclusion of fire sprinklers if required, proper fire hydrant system, paved access, and secondary emergency access routes. Implementation of these plans and policies, in conjunction with compliance with the California Fire Code, would ensure cumulative impacts with respect to wildfire hazards are less than significant.

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