7.0 OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

An environmental impact report (EIR) must identify any significant irreversible environmental changes that could be caused by implementing a project. These may include current or future uses of non-renewable resources, and secondary or growth-inducing impacts that commit future generations to similar uses. Irretrievable commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such current consumption is justified (*California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] Guidelines* Section 15126.2(c)). Section 15126.2(c) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* states that significant irreversible environmental changes associated with a proposed project shall be discussed, including

- uses of nonrenewable resources during the initial and continued phases of the project that may be irreversible because of a large commitment of such resources make removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely;
- primary impacts and particularly secondary impacts (such as highway improvement that provides access to a previously inaccessible are), which generally commit future generations to similar uses; and
- irreversible damage that could result from environmental accidents associated with the project.

7.1.1 Irreversible Commitment of Resources

The proposed project involves the construction of 11 low-density residential units on an open space parcel located adjacent to existing residential development. Development of this type would require the consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources. Overall, the proposed project would commit the Highland Estates site to a new type of use that would be of a greater intensity than currently exists on the site. No changes in land uses would occur to about 95 acres of the 99-acre parcel since development of most of the Resource Management parcel is not proposed as part of the project. Given the addition of 11 homes to the site, an irreversible commitment to the use of renewable and non-renewable resources during the construction and operation phases of the project would occur with project implementation.

Resources such as lumber and other forest products are generally considered renewable resources. Such resources would be replenished over the lifetime of the project. As such, the development of the project would not result in the irreversible commitment of renewable resources. Non-renewable resources, such as natural gas, petroleum based products, asphalt, petrochemical construction materials, steel, copper and other metals, etc., are considered to be resources that are available in finite supply, and would not be replaced over the lifetime of the project.

The demand for renewable and non-renewable resources is expected to increase regardless of the development of the proposed project. Demographic projections provided by the California Department of Finance estimates that the population of the County of San Mateo population will grow to 747,134 by 2010 and to 786,740 by 2020.[1] This increase in population will directly result in the need for more retail, commercial, residential, and recreational facilities in order to provide the services associated with population growth of this magnitude. If not consumed by the proposed project, these resources would likely be committed to other development projects to meet the anticipated needs related to increases in population.

Irreversible Environmental Changes

The proposed project site is predominately surrounded by single-family residential uses. Other surrounding land uses in the project area include the Crystal Springs United Methodist Church and the Crystal Springs Shopping Center east of the site; the Hillsborough West apartments southeast of the site; and the Highlands Recreation Center west of the site. The Highlands Elementary School is approximately 200 feet northwest of the project site. The site itself is mostly undeveloped and currently consists of 99 acres of open space including 2 acres of Cal Water tank sites. The proposed project involves the development of residential land uses adjacent to areas of the County with similar existing land uses.

Irreversible long-term environmental changes associated with the proposed project would include the following potential effects:

- The project would result in a change in the visual character of the site as a result of development to a formerly undeveloped, open space area.
- The project would result in a small increase in local and regional vehicular traffic, which in turn would result in increases in air pollutants and noise emissions generated by this traffic, among other impacts.
- The project would include changes in topography related to construction cut and fill activities required by the project.
- The project would result in the increased use of public services such as waste disposal, water treatment, schools, police, and fire services.

Design features have been incorporated into the development proposal and mitigation measures are proposed in this EIR that would minimize the effects of the environmental changes associated with the development of the project to the maximum extent feasible. The 11 proposed homes would be consistent with and adjacent to existing County of San Mateo residential development. However, the project would

1 San Mateo County Report, 2007-2008.

result in significant and unavoidable impacts, which are discussed at the end of each subsection in **Section 4.0, Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures**.

Potential Environmental Damage from Accidents

The project does not propose any uniquely hazardous uses, and its operation would not be expected to cause environmental accidents that would affect other areas. The project site is located within a seismically active region and would be exposed to ground shaking during a seismic event. Conformance with the regulatory provisions of the Uniform Building Code related to construction standards would minimize, to the extent feasible, damage and injuries in the event of such an occurrence. Therefore, the proposed project would not create a situation where irreversible environmental damage could be caused by accidents on the project site.