

5.0 Relationships of Impacts and Commitments of Resources

5.1 Significance of Unavoidable Impacts

Based on a thorough analysis of the environmental resources that comprise the current and future context of the preferred alternative ~~proposed action~~ (implementation of a new Master Site Plan), none of the identified environmental impacts is considered to be of significant intensity. By avoiding the most environmentally sensitive areas of the Federal Center and implementing mitigation measures to further reduce identified impacts, the action alternatives would minimize the potential effects on the natural and manmade environment. While some unavoidable impacts may occur at levels above that which can be mitigated completely by current management practices, they are not excessive and are commonly anticipated consequences of such development.

5.2 Short-Term Use of the Environment versus Long-Term Productivity

The preferred alternative ~~proposed action~~ under consideration in this EIS, implementation of a Master Site Plan for the Federal Center, would balance the short-term use of the environment with long-term land use, economic, and community benefits for the City of Lakewood, Jefferson County, and the Denver metropolitan area.

The most environmentally sensitive areas of the Federal Center would be preserved as usable open space and wildlife habitat under the action alternatives. The majority of the Federal Center is already disturbed, however, and is no longer feasibly used for natural resource management or renewable resource production (agriculture or forestry). The long-term productivity of the site is therefore defined by its potential to serve human economic or cultural needs, including redevelopment of the site for use by the federal government and potentially private-sector users.

During the construction and operation of the proposed facilities, localized environmental disruption would likely occur in excess of what could be mitigated completely by best management practices and current technology. During construction, environmental disruption could include localized noise, air, vibration, and traffic impacts, although these impacts should be short term in nature. Operation-oriented disruption to the natural environment could include the introduction of impervious surfaces, the removal of natural vegetation, the disturbance to resident wildlife species, and the loss of some vacant land.

Disruption to the human environment could likely include a changed visual environment and increased congestion on roadway networks. The disruptions primarily would affect the residents of neighborhoods adjacent to the Federal Center, specifically those located to the immediate south and east. In addition, the residences and businesses located in the study area would experience increased construction- and operation-related impacts. The proposed phasing of development, however, would serve to mitigate the impacts.

The short-term impacts on the environment would be offset by the numerous benefits that either action alternative would generate in the long term. The redevelopment within the Federal Center site under either action alternative would fulfill economic development goals by providing a range of employment opportunities during the construction and operation phases, improving working conditions for and the efficiency of thousands of current and future government employees, helping retain federal agencies on the site, and increasing the accessibility and usability of the site by current and future residents. The proposed mixed-use and recreational facilities offered under the two action alternatives would therefore be highly utilized by employees and residents alike. The action alternatives would also have a positive short-term and long-term impact on economic conditions in the study area by generating increased spending and resulting fiscal revenues during construction and operation. The development's generation of public revenues from real estate, income, and sales taxes, which are levied on the properties and their users, would contribute to the fiscal well being of the City of Lakewood and Jefferson County.

Consistent with the planning policies and development framework established by local jurisdictions, the proposed office, research and development, retail, residential, and recreation opportunities that would be offered under both action alternatives at the Federal Center would transform the undeveloped portions of the Federal Center into a large-scale, mixed-use employment center oriented towards new public transit service. As a result, the Federal Center would provide an increased regional focus for the City of Lakewood and Jefferson County. The high-quality development of the action alternatives would create an attractive destination that would enhance the status of the immediate area and serve as a catalyst for further investment in the local community. The strategic location and transit orientation of the action alternatives would provide proactive means for the City of Lakewood and Jefferson County to fulfill several of their broader land use, economic development, and community service objectives.

Given the suburban context of the Federal Center site, the long-term productivity of the site would be compromised if the property is not redeveloped. Ultimately, the renovation and continued development of the Federal Center would maximize its long-term productivity within its already developed suburban context.

Under the No Action Alternative, the relationship of short-term uses of the environment and long-term productivity would be unbalanced. Although the alternative would not generate incremental adverse impacts on the environment, it would initiate costs for the federal government, the City of Lakewood, and Jefferson County. These costs would include foregone construction and operations revenue, the lack of an expanded regional economic focus, and the loss of environmental enhancement and recreation opportunities at the Federal Center.

5.3 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

Irreversible and irretrievable impacts are those that result in the consumption of resources that cannot be restored or returned to their original condition, even with mitigation. Implementation of a new Master Site Plan, including the construction and operation of a redeveloped Federal Center, which is the subject of consideration in this EIS, would involve the use of natural, physical, human, economic, and fiscal resources. The use of these

resources includes adverse and beneficial impacts, some of which involve irreversible and irretrievable commitments.

Implementation of either of the action alternatives would require the utilization of substantial quantities of building materials and energy resources to construct the buildings and necessary infrastructure. While the use of these natural and manmade resources would be considered irreversible, none of the above resources is of such a limited availability or precious value that its use would adversely affect the completion of the action alternative or other regional projects. (In addition, many of the natural and manmade materials used in the project are irreversible only for the lifetime of the project itself. When the project reaches the end of its useful life, a substantial portion of the natural and manmade products could be recycled for future use in other projects.) Although the energy consumption associated with the action alternatives would be both an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of a resource, the consumption would be for a limited duration and would not require system cutbacks during the phases of development.

The use of labor resources during project construction would also result in an irreversible and irretrievable commitment, although the existing labor supply would be able to accommodate project demands. In fact, the demand for labor resources would help lower unemployment rates in the construction industry in the Denver metropolitan area and reintroduce labor resources into the local economy.

The commitment of land under the action alternatives would be a major, long-term commitment of resources. While either action alternative would convert some undeveloped open space to impervious area, the commitment would not necessarily be irreversible or irretrievable, because many of the development parcels consist of current or former building sites or parking lots. Whereas the impervious area would necessitate stormwater management measures and practices to reduce the adverse environmental impacts, these measures and practices are anticipated consequences of such large-scale development. In addition, the development is generally consistent with the land use plans or policies of the local jurisdictions. Furthermore, the enhancement of the open-space and recreational activities inherent in the action alternatives would provide a positive benefit to the area, in terms of increasing the accessibility and productivity of the existing land resources and generating multiple community benefits for on-site and local employees and residents.

The No Action Alternative would involve no additional commitment of irreversible and irretrievable resources.

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