

5.8 PUBLIC SERVICES – FIRE PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

5.8.1 INTRODUCTION

This section assesses the proposed projects potential impacts on fire protection services. Information for the following analysis was obtained from interviews with representatives of the Porterville Fire Department,¹ and from correspondence received from the Fire Department (located in **Appendix 5.8**). This section also summarizes information contained in the Porterville 2030 General Plan and corresponding environmental impact report (EIR).

5.8.2 SUMMARY OF 2030 GENERAL PLAN EIR FINDINGS

At full general plan buildout, approximately 13,000 acres of developed land (37 percent) will be within a 1.5-mile radius of the City's four existing fire stations.² In order to meet the service demand of greater population, approximate locations and sizes of new fire stations are proposed by the 2030 General Plan, and would be built as needed to meet demand.³ These additional stations will not substantially increase the area of developed land but will help the Fire Department to maintain its Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating and reach its response-time goal. Additional fire facilities will need to be planned as the City expands north, near the Porterville Municipal Airport and Lake Success.

Specific locations for the proposed fire stations are not identified in the 2030 General Plan, nor is analysis given regarding the potential impacts associated with the proposed fire stations. Specific analysis of environmental impacts would be performed at the time the City is ready to construct the proposed fire stations. The programmatic EIR prepared for the Porterville 2030 General Plan ensures that adequate fire and emergency services will exist to serve the future needs of the City through compliance with standards such as response times and staffing levels.⁴ Impacts associated with providing fire protection and emergency services for buildout of the 2030 General Plan were found to be less than significant.

¹ Written communication with Loran Blasdell, Battalion Chief/Fire Marshal, Porterville Fire Department, February 1, 2009.

² City of Porterville, *2030 General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report*, November 2007, 239.

³ City of Porterville, *2030 General Plan*, "Public Health and Safety Element," 179.

⁴ City of Porterville, *2030 General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report*, Chapter 3.11, "Public Utilities and Services," November 2007.

5.8.3 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Fire Stations

The City of Porterville Fire Department provides fire and life safety services for residents located within the City limits. Additional services for unincorporated areas within the planning area are provided by the Tulare County Fire Department. City fire dispatch is handled by the Porterville Police Department. As shown in **Table 5.8-1, Fire Station Locations and Facilities**, the Porterville Fire Department provides fire service from two stations within the City. Another four stations are proposed to meet future demands with general plan buildout.

**Table 5.8-1
Fire Station Locations and Facilities**

No.	Location	Staffing	Facilities
1 ¹	40 W. Cleveland Avenue	Min. of 4, max of 6 per shift.	3 heavy fire engines (type I), 1 75-ft. Quint aerial ladder truck, 1 rescue unit, and 1 light unit (Patrol)
2 ¹	500 N. Newcomb Street	Min. of 3, max of 4 per shift.	2 heavy fire engines (type I), 1 light unit (Patrol)
19 ²	22315 Avenue 152	1 full-time per shift and 17 paid on-call fire fighters	1 heavy fire engine (type II), 1 light engine (type IV), 1 water tender (tractor, trailer)
20 ²	1551 E. Success Drive	1 full-time per shift and 17 paid on-call fire fighters	1 heavy fire engine (type I), 1 light engine (type IV), 1 water tender (bobtail)

Proposed Fire Stations Locations

Jaye Street at Worth Avenue
Morton Avenue at Crestview Street
Porterville Airport
Reid Avenue at Main Street

Source: Porterville 2030 General Plan

Note:

¹ City-operated station

² County-operated station

Both Stations No. 1 and 2 would serve the proposed project. Fire Station No. 1 is located approximately 2.15 miles from the project site and has a response time of approximately 6 minutes.⁵ Fire Station No. 2 is located approximately 4.77 miles from the project site and has a response time of 8 minutes.⁶ The proposed fire station located at Jaye Street and Worth Avenue would be located approximately 1 mile

⁵ Written communication with Loran Blasdel, Battalion Chief/Fire Marshal, Porterville Fire Department, February 1, 2009.

⁶ Ibid.

from the project site and, once completed, would provide primary response for the project proposed project. At this time, it is unknown when this station will be constructed. **Figure 5.8-1, Fire Station Locations**, shows the locations of existing and proposed fire stations.

Response Times

The ISO—a private organization that surveys fire departments in cities and towns across the United States—awarded the Porterville Fire Department a Class 3 rating (1 being highest and 10 being lowest).⁷ This rating considers a community's fire defense capacity versus fire potential, and then uses the score to set property insurance premiums for homeowners and commercial property owners.

Currently, the Fire Department responds to 60 percent of its calls within 5 minutes.⁸ The internal response time goal set by the department is to provide service within 5 minutes of the 911 call being received 80 percent of the time. The proposed new fire stations will help the department reach its goal. As discussed above, current response times to the project site from Fire Stations No. 1 and 2 are 6 minutes and 8 minutes, respectively.

Fire Flows and Hydrants

In general, the required fire flow is related to land use as the quantity of water necessary for fire protection varies with the type of development, life hazard, type and level of occupancy, and degree of fire hazard. The minimum fire flow required is determined based on the current adopted edition of the California Fire Code (CFC). The required fire flow for the proposed project is approximately 4,000 gallons per minute (gpm) at 20 pounds per square inch for a minimum 4-hour duration. A minimum flow of 1,500 gpm must be provided from any one hydrant.

Prior to construction, the applicant would submit plans to the Fire Department for placement of fire hydrants. Hydrants must be placed with a maximum spacing of 300 feet on center and no farther than 120 feet from the end of any street.⁹

⁷ City of Porterville, *2030 General Plan*, "Public Health and Safety Element," 179.

⁸ Written communication with Loran Blasdel, Battalion Chief/Fire Marshal, Porterville Fire Department, February 1, 2009.

⁹ Written communication with Loran Blasdel, Battalion Chief/Fire Marshal, Porterville Fire Department, February 1, 2009.

5.8.4 REGULATORY PLANS AND POLICIES

State

California Fire Code

The CFC¹⁰ applies to all occupancies throughout the State of California as annotated and establishes fire flow requirements. The CFC is the minimum state standard for fire code implementation in California, and is based on the content of the Uniform Fire Code.¹¹ The CFC provides for a reduction in required flow of up to 50 percent when the building is provided with an approved automatic sprinkler system. The project would comply with the regulations of the CFC by providing a looped water system that provides sufficient fire flow to meet Uniform Fire Code standards along the full frontage of parcels created by the development, except where such infrastructure exists and is in good condition in the opinion of the City Engineer.

Local

City of Porterville

2030 General Plan

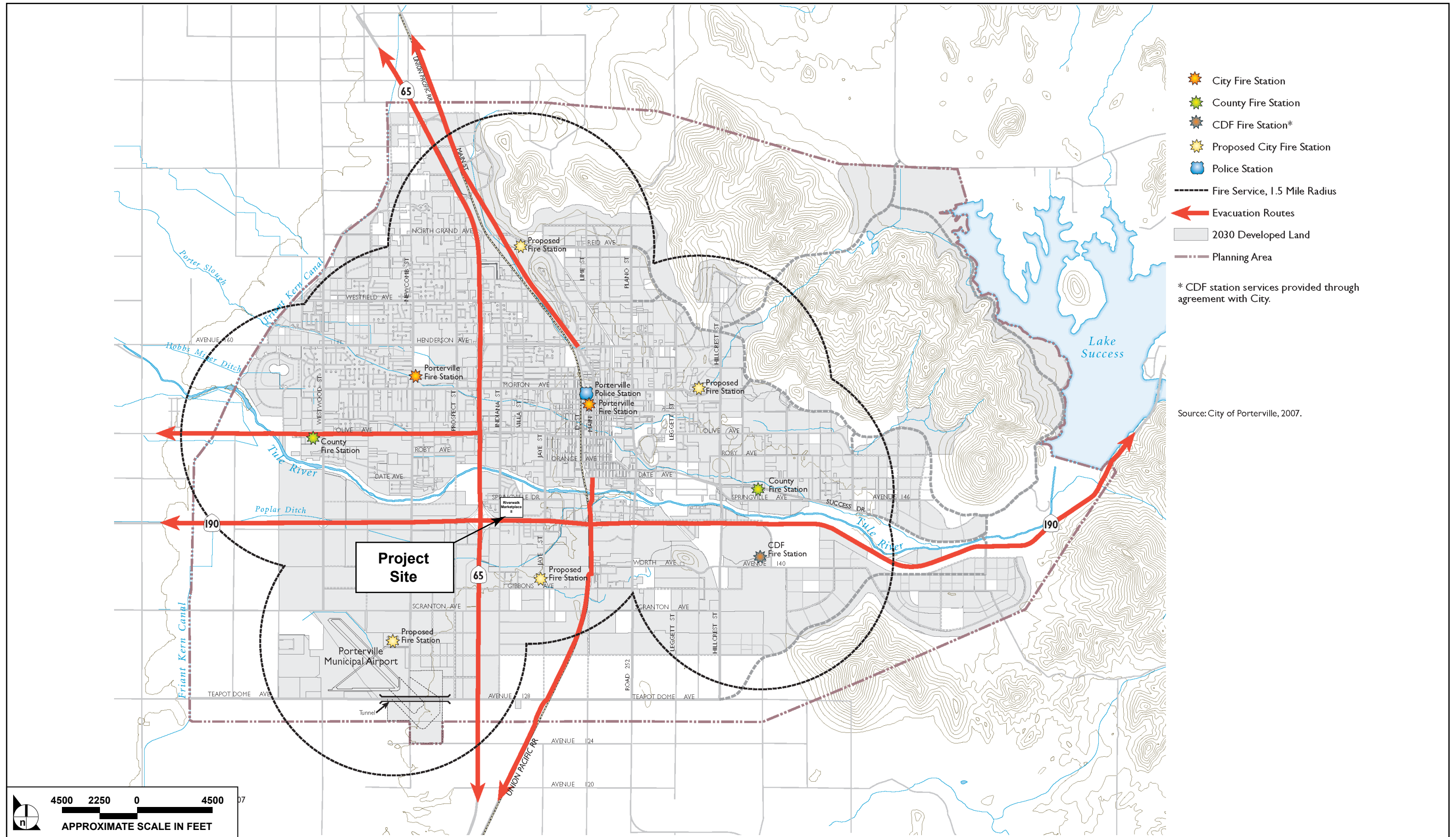
To provide a comprehensive program of safety services including police, fire, and medical response in all parts of Porterville, the Public Health and Safety Element of the 2030 Porterville General Plan has identified a number of implementation policies.

PHS -I-24 Provide cost effective fire, police, and emergency medical service within the City to minimize potential injury, loss and/or destruction to persons or property.

PHS-I-25 Maintain the City's Class 3 ISO rating, or better, for fire protection

¹⁰ California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Part 9, California Building Standards Commission, 2007 California Fire Code.

¹¹ The National Fire Protection Agency Uniform Fire Code, 2006.



SOURCE: Porterville 2030 General Plan - 2008

FIGURE 5.8-1

Fire Station Locations

- PHS-I-27 Continually assess the adequacy of current funding programs for police, fire, and paramedic services and investigate new funding sources.
- PHS-I-28 Ensure that new development incorporates safety concerns into the site, circulation, building design and landscaping plans.

Municipal Code

The City of Porterville has adopted the CFC, as specified in the Municipal Code.¹² The CFC includes regulations pertaining to inspection of permanent and temporary buildings; investigation of fires; review of construction plans; fire and life safety education; the design and construction of new buildings, remodeling of existing buildings, and additions to existing buildings; design of fire protection systems and equipment; access requirements; hazards from outside fires; and storage, use, processing, handling, and on-site transportation of flammable and combustible gases, liquids, solids, and hazardous materials. The project is designed to meet the requirements by providing fire protection systems and equipment, providing adequate access, proper handling, storage, and use of flammable materials and will submit plans to the fire department for design approval.

5.8.5 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

According to Appendix G of the *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines*,¹³ project impacts to public services could be considered significant if it caused any of the results listed below:

- substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities; or
- the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services, including fire protection.

5.8.6 PROJECT IMPACTS

The analysis of potential impacts to fire protection and emergency services associated with construction and operation of the proposed project, including the significance criteria applicable to assessing such impacts, is presented below.

¹² City of Porterville, Municipal Code, Section 12.1-1.

¹³ California Environmental Quality Act, *State CEQA Guidelines*, Appendix G, 2009, 277–291.

Impact 5.8-1 **Construction of the proposed project could create temporary increase in calls for service. *These impacts would be less than significant with implementation of standard construction procedures.***

Construction of the proposed project would increase the potential for accidental on-site fires from such sources as the operation of mechanical equipment and use of flammable construction materials. In most cases, the implementation of good housekeeping procedures, such as the maintenance of mechanical equipment and the immediate and complete cleanup of spills by the construction contractors and the work crews, would minimize these hazards.

Construction activities also have the potential to affect fire protection services, by adding construction traffic to the street network and by partial lane closures during street improvements and utility installations, thereby affecting emergency vehicle response times. These impacts, while potentially adverse, are considered to be less than significant for the following reasons:

- Construction impacts are temporary in nature.
- Partial lane closures would not greatly affect emergency vehicles, the drivers that normally have a variety of options for avoiding traffic, such as using their sirens to clear a path of travel or driving in the lanes of opposing traffic. Additionally, if there are partial closures to street surrounding the project site, flagmen would be used to facilitate the traffic flow until construction is complete.
- Site maintenance procedures employed by the construction contractors and work crews minimize these hazards (i.e., proper storage of building materials, disposing of trash and other flammable materials properly, etc.).
- Overall, construction is not considered to be a high-risk activity, and the Fire Department is equipped and prepared to deal with construction-related traffic and fires should they occur.

Project construction would not be expected to tax firefighting and emergency services as existing capacity is adequate, thus there would not be a need for new or expanded fire facilities in order to maintain acceptable fire protection services to serve construction related needs. Therefore, construction related impacts to fire protection would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required.

Residual Impacts

Impacts are less than significant.

Impact 5.8-2 **Operation of the proposed project would introduce new uses and persons to the project site that could increase the demands on the Fire Department. Sufficient resources exist to accommodate the needs of the proposed project with the installation of project fire sprinklers and with projected tax revenue from the proposed project. Impacts would be considered less than significant.**

The proposed project does not include uses that would use or generate large quantities of hazardous and/or toxic materials, or that could have a greater potential to cause fires or result in serious accidents than similar developments in Porterville, Tulare County, or the state. The proposed commercial uses are expected to create the typical range of fire service calls that other such uses create including structure and car fires as well as medical emergencies. All such calls can be adequately addressed with the types of equipment typically found at City fire stations. Moreover, the project site is not located near uses that represent a dangerous fire hazard, such as a refinery.

Existing Fire Stations No. 1 and 2 would serve the proposed project. As discussed above, the response times from these stations to the project site would average over 5 minutes, which exceeds the desired response time by the Fire Department. However, the proposed project would be designed in accordance with all applicable regulations found in the current adopted version of the CFC. Installation of fire sprinklers in structures, as is proposed by the project, would help offset the response time by suppressing a fire long enough for crews to arrive. In addition, occupancy of the project would generate revenue to the City general fund that would help fund the planned future fire station at Jaye Street and Worth Avenue, identified in the City's 2030 General Plan, which would improve response times once this station is constructed.

Currently, no fire hydrants exist on site. The proposed project would include hydrants in accordance with applicable requirements. Prior to construction, the applicant would submit plans to the Fire Department for placement of fire hydrants. Hydrants must be placed with a maximum spacing of 300 feet on center and no farther than 120 feet from the end of any street.¹⁴ Fire Department review would ensure that the project would be developed with adequate fire hydrants.

A fiscal impact analysis (fiscal analysis)¹⁵ was prepared for the proposed project, and is included in **Appendix 5.6** of this draft EIR. According to the fiscal analysis, the proposed project is expected to generate recurring annual revenues in the form of property tax, real property transfer tax, sales tax, utility users tax, and business license tax.

¹⁴ Written communication with Loran Blasdel, Battalion Chief/Fire Marshal, Porterville Fire Department, February 1, 2009.

¹⁵ Robert Charles Lesser & Co., *Fiscal Impact Analysis, Riverwalk Marketplace Phase II*, October 15, 2008.

The City of Porterville’s 2008 preliminary budget allocates \$3.6 million to the Fire Department. Using the current acreage distribution within the City of Porterville, approximately \$1,100 is attributed to each commercial acre within the City of Porterville. The estimated Fire Department costs associated with Riverwalk Marketplace Phase II total approximately \$23,900.¹⁶

Total general fund revenues generated by the proposed project are projected at \$960,000 annually, while total annual recurring expenditures generated by the proposed project is estimated at \$112,000 including approximately \$23,000 of Fire Department costs (constant 2008 dollars). Therefore, at full development the proposed project is expected to have a net positive fiscal impact of \$850,000 annually to the City of Porterville after fully funding all required governmental services, including fire protection services. For these reasons, the incremental increase in demand for fire protection facilities (including staffing) associated with construction and occupancy of the Riverwalk Marketplace II Project would be covered by established funding sources. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Residual Impacts

Impacts are less than significant.

5.8.7 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Impact 5.8-3 **Buildout of the Porterville 2030 General Plan will increase City population to approximately 107,000 persons. In order to meet the service demand of greater population, new fire stations are proposed. These additional stations will not substantially increase the area of developed land but will help the Department to maintain its ISO rating and reach its response time goal. Impacts are considered less than significant.**

At full general plan buildout, approximately 13,000 acres of developed land (37 percent) will be within a 1.5-mile radius of the four existing fire stations. In order to meet the increased service demand of a greater population, new fire stations are proposed by the 2030 General Plan. The Fire Department has planned Station No. 3 for the area of Jaye Street and State Route (SR) 190, and Station No. 4 near the intersection of Morton Avenue and Crestview Street. These additional stations will not substantially increase the area of developed land but will help the department maintain its ISO rating and reach its

¹⁶ Robert Charles Lesser & Co., *Fiscal Impact Analysis, Riverwalk Marketplace Phase II*, October 15, 2008.

response-time goal. The proposed project, along with other future projects, would contribute financially to the City of Porterville general fund through taxes. With payment of these taxes and fees, funding would be available to the Porterville Fire Department to increase staffing levels and construct new stations required to provide adequate service. Therefore, while buildout of the 2030 General Plan, including the proposed project, would create additional demands on fire services, these demands would be met by constructing new stations and increasing staffing levels to meet demand. Impacts would be less than significant.

Cumulative Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures beyond compliance with existing code and policies of the 2030 General Plan is required.

5.8.8 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

Impacts are considered less than significant.