

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the purpose and focus of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR), a discussion of the intended use of this Draft EIR, a description of the organization of the Draft EIR, and a discussion of the public review process and potential areas of controversy.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning (City) has prepared this Draft EIR for the following purposes:

- To satisfy the requirements of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code, Sections 21000–21178) and the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 4, Chapter 14, Sections 15000–15387).
- To inform the general public, the local community, and responsible and interested public agencies of the nature of the proposed West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert New Community Plan (West Adams New Community Plan or proposed project), its possible environmental effects, possible measures to mitigate those effects, and alternatives to the proposed project.
- To enable the City to consider environmental consequences when deciding whether to approve the proposed West Adams New Community Plan.
- To provide a basis for preparation of future environmental documents. Lead agencies for individual projects may use this EIR as the basis of their cumulative impacts analysis and may also use the information contained within the EIR in order to “tier” subsequent environmental documentation of projects within the Community Plan Area (CPA).

The determination that the City of Los Angeles is the “lead agency” is made in accordance with Sections 15051 and 15367 of the CEQA Guidelines, which define the lead agency as the public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project. This Draft EIR reflects the independent judgment of the City regarding the potential environmental impacts, the level of significance of the impacts both before and after mitigation, and the mitigation measures proposed to reduce impacts.

As described in CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, public agencies are charged with the duty to avoid or substantially lessen significant environmental impacts, where feasible. In discharging this duty, a public agency has an obligation to balance the project’s significant impacts on the environment with other conditions, including economic, social, technological, legal, and other benefits. This Draft EIR is an informational document, the purpose of which is to identify the potentially significant impacts of the proposed project on the environment and to indicate the manner in which those significant impacts can be avoided or significantly lessened; to identify any significant and unavoidable adverse impacts that cannot be mitigated; and to identify reasonable and feasible alternatives to the proposed project that would eliminate any significant adverse environmental impacts or reduce the impacts to a less-than-significant level.

This Draft EIR was prepared in accordance with Section 15151 of the CEQA Guidelines which defines the standards for EIR adequacy:

“An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in the light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR would summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The courts have looked not for perfection; but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure.”

1.2 AUTHORIZATION AND FOCUS

The lead agency is required to consider the information in the Draft EIR, along with any other relevant information, in making its decision on the proposed West Adams Community Plan. Although the Draft EIR does not determine the ultimate decision that will be made regarding implementation of the project, CEQA requires the City to consider the information in the Draft EIR and make findings regarding each significant effect in the EIR.

The City will certify the Final EIR for the proposed West Adams New Community Plan. Once certified, the Final EIR will serve as the base environmental document for the proposed West Adams New Community Plan and will be used as a basis for decisions on development in the West Adams CPA. Other agencies may also use this Draft EIR in their review and approval process.

Specifically, this document evaluates the environmental effects that could result from implementation of the proposed project. The following topic areas are addressed in this Draft EIR.

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forest Lands
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gases
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population, Housing, and Employment
- Public Services
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Cumulative Impacts
- Alternatives

1.3 APPLICANT

In accordance with Section 15351 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the Applicant is the person who proposes to carry out a project which needs a lease, permit, license, certificate, or other entitlement for use or financial assistance from one or more public agencies when that person applies for the governmental approval or assistance. Contact information for the Applicant is presented below:

City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning
200 North Spring Street, Room 667
Los Angeles, CA 90012

1.4 LEAD AGENCY

In accordance with Section 15367 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the lead agency for the proposed project is the City. The lead agency is “the public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving the project.” Contact information for the City is presented below:

City of Los Angeles
Department of City Planning
200 North Spring Street, Room 667
Los Angeles, CA 90012

1.5 TYPE OF EIR

The West Adams New Community Plan is one of the 35 Community Plans which comprise the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive General Plan and is intended to promote an arrangement of land uses, streets, and services that will encourage and contribute to the economic, social, and physical health, safety, welfare, and convenience of the people who live and work in the community. The proposed project will allocate land for the range of uses that the community will need through 2030, including land for housing, jobs, services, and recreation, and improve the link between land use and transportation in a manner that is consistent with the General Plan Framework, the Citywide growth strategy. The proposed project's goals, objectives, policies, and programs are specific, action-oriented ideals which the City will promote during the lifespan of the proposed project.

The proposed West Adams New Community Plan describes the capacity for future development for a portion of the City. While the West Adams New Community Plan includes a series of implementing ordinances that include land use category and zone changes, amendments to the existing Crenshaw Corridor Specific Plan, as well as the adoption of a new Supplemental Use District called the West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Community Plan Implementation Overlay District (CPIO) that will serve to implement supplemental development standards tailored to the West Adams CPA, it is not an implementation plan in and of itself, and its adoption does not constitute a commitment to any specific project, construction schedule, or funding priority.

Each project undertaken during the planning horizon of the West Adams New Community Plan must be approved individually by the City, in compliance with CEQA. Therefore, this proposed West Adams New Community Plan is a First Tier/Program EIR that evaluates the effects of the entire proposed project at a program level.

Section 15168(a) of the CEQA Guidelines defines a Program EIR as an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either: 1) geographically; 2) as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions; 3) in connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or 4) as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways.

Section 15168(b) of the CEQA Guidelines indicates that use of a Program EIR can provide the following advantages. The Program EIR can:

- Provide an occasion for a more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives than would be practical in an EIR on an individual action;
- Ensure consideration of cumulative impacts that might be slighted in a case-by-case analysis;
- Avoid duplicative reconsideration of basic policy considerations;
- Allow the lead agency to consider broad policy alternatives and program-wide mitigation measures at an early time when the agency has greater flexibility to deal with basic problems or cumulative impacts; and
- Allow reduction in paperwork.

With respect to other development projects that may be proposed during the West Adams New Community Plan planning horizon, CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines states that subsequent projects should be examined in light of the Program EIR to determine whether additional environmental documentation must be prepared. If no new significant effects would occur, all significant effects have been adequately addressed and no new mitigation measures would be required, the subsequent projects within the scope of the proposed West Adams New Community Plan could rely on the environmental analysis provided in this Program EIR, and no additional environmental documentation must be prepared. The subsequent documents may also rely on the Program EIR, as appropriate, for general discussions and for the analysis and cumulative impacts, but would

be tiered to allow the subsequent documents to focus on more project- and site-specific impacts. In either case, CEQA findings must be made for subsequent projects.

1.6 INTENDED USE OF THIS DRAFT PROGRAM EIR

This EIR is a program-level EIR. The Draft EIR will analyze the environmental impacts that would occur upon implementation of the proposed West Adams New Community Plan. Future discretionary projects within the West Adams CPA that are consistent with the proposed project would, therefore, only require the preparation of a Project Level EIR, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or other appropriate environmental clearance that would analyze project-specific impacts on the environment which:

- are peculiar to the project or the parcel on which the project would be located;
- are capable of being further mitigated by measures proposed in the Project Level or Focused EIR;
- were not analyzed as significant effects on the environment in the Program EIR;
- are potentially significant off-site impacts and cumulative impacts, which were not discussed in the prior EIR prepared for the proposed project; and
- are previously identified significant effects which, as a result of substantial new information which was not known at the time the EIR was certified, are determined to have a more severe adverse impact than discussed in the prior EIR.

Project-specific environmental reviews could "tier" off of the proposed West Adams New Community Plan Program EIR. This could expedite the discretionary planning approval process for those projects by reducing the need to prepare repetitive environmental studies while assuring a comprehensive analysis of all potential impacts specific to a proposed project. It is important to note that the CPIO subdistricts and amendments to the Crenshaw Corridor Specific Plan contain two types of development standards, administrative (by-right) and discretionary. If future projects will require discretionary review of their development standards or if the project meets or exceeds the thresholds for a major project involving 50 units or 50,000 square feet of floor area as defined by the City's Site Plan Review process, the projects must be reviewed by the City on a case-by-case basis, as is the current procedure when Site Plan Review is required. In the event of a future project needing discretionary review or Site Plan Review, environmental review would occur on a case-by-case basis per CEQA Guidelines Section 15152(d).

Discretionary Projects including Specific Plan Project Permit Compliance applications, CPIO and Specific Plan adjustments and exceptions, conditional use permits, as well as major projects requiring Site Plan Review pursuant to Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) Section 16.05., shall adhere to all State and City environmental review procedures as identified through the adopted City of Los Angeles CEQA Guidelines, however, as determined by the City's Environmental Staff Advisory Committee's (ESAC) review of the Initial Study, such projects may only require the preparation of a Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration or focused Project Level EIR that would analyze project-specific impacts not otherwise analyzed through this program-level EIR.

1.7 DRAFT EIR ORGANIZATION

1.0 INTRODUCTION. As stated above, this chapter contains an overview of the purpose and focus of the Draft EIR, a discussion of the intended use of this Draft EIR, a description of the organization of the Draft EIR, and a discussion of the public review process and potential areas of controversy.

2.0 SUMMARY. This chapter provides a summary of the proposed project, its potential environmental effects and mitigation measures, and a summary of the alternatives to the proposed project evaluated in this Draft EIR.

3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION. This chapter describes the project location, existing conditions, project objectives, and a description of the proposed project.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS. This chapter contains the environmental setting, project analyses, mitigation measures, and conclusions regarding the level of significance after mitigation for each of the following environmental issues:

- 4.1 Aesthetics
- 4.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- 4.3 Air Quality
- 4.4 Biological Resources
- 4.5 Cultural Resources
- 4.6 Geology and Soils
- 4.7 Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- 4.8 Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- 4.9 Hydrology and Water Quality
- 4.10 Land Use and Planning
- 4.11 Mineral Resources
- 4.12 Noise
- 4.13 Population, Housing, and Employment
- 4.14 Public Service
- 4.15 Transportation and Traffic
- 4.16 Utilities and Service Systems

5.0 ALTERNATIVES. This chapter provides analysis of each of the alternatives to the proposed project. The alternatives considered for the proposed project are:

- **The Existing West Adams Community Plan (No Project Alternative).** Under this Alternative, the existing West Adams Community Plan would not be modified and development would continue to occur under the existing goals, objectives, and policies. This Alternative is considered the No Project Alternative, which is a required alternative analysis under CEQA.
- **The Proposed West Adams New Community Plan without Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Alternative.** Under this Alternative, most of the changes to the existing West Adams Community Plan would be similar as under the proposed project. However, this Alternative would not shift development intensity to focused TOD areas and would involve a scenario where less population, housing, and employment growth would take place compared to the proposed project.

6.0 OTHER CEQA DISCUSSIONS. This chapter provides a discussion of the (1) significant environmental effects of the proposed project, (2) significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the proposed project is implemented, (3) significant irreversible environmental changes that would result from implementation of the proposed project, (4) growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project, and (5) cumulative impacts.

7.0 PERSONS AND SOURCES CONSULTED. This chapter lists all of the persons, public agencies, and organizations that were consulted or contributed and all the references and sources used in the preparation of this Draft EIR.

1.8 PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENTS

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for this Draft EIR was issued on February 1, 2008 by the City for a 30-day public review period. A total of 12 comment letters were received. Information, data, and observations resulting from these letters are included throughout this Draft EIR where relevant. The NOP and copies of each comment letter received are included in Appendix A of this Draft EIR. A public scoping meeting was held on February 27, 2008. The purpose of this meeting was to provide early consultation for the public to express their concerns about the proposed project, and acquire information and make recommendations on issues to be addressed in the Draft EIR.

In accordance with Sections 15087 and 15105 of the CEQA Guidelines, this Draft EIR is being circulated for a 45-day public review period. Responsible and trustee agencies and the public are invited to comment in writing on the information contained in this document. Persons and agencies commenting are encouraged to provide information that they believe is missing from the Draft EIR and to identify where the information can be obtained. All comment letters received concerning the Draft EIR will be responded to in writing, and the comment letters, together with the responses to those comments will be included in the Final EIR.

Comment letters should be sent to:

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City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning
200 North Spring Street, Room 667
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Fax: (213) 978-1477
E-mail: Reuben.Caldwell@lacity.org

1.9 AREAS OF CONTROVERSY/ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED

Potential areas of controversy and issues to be resolved by the City's decision-makers may include those environmental issue areas where the potential for an unavoidable and significant impact has been identified. These areas may include population and housing growth, increased building heights, and intensities, as well as impacts to cultural resources. Based on the NOP comment letters, issues known to be of concern in the community include historical resources, overcrowding, and transit development. Refer to Appendix A for copies of the NOP comment letters.