

SECTION 1

Introduction

This Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA) has been prepared pursuant to California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21155.2.

1.1 Project Description Summary

The subject of this SCEA is a proposed mixed-use development known as the 550 Shatto Place Project or the Soul Project. The Proposed Project (Project) is located on an approximately 51,236-square-foot (1.17-acre) site (Project Site) in the Wilshire Community Plan area of the City of Los Angeles (City). The Project Site is located at 522, 530, and 550 South Shatto Place, and 3119 West 6th Street, and is comprised of three lots with the single Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 5077-004-033. The Project Site is bounded by Shatto Place on the west and West 6th Street on the south. Immediately to the east are residential uses, and beyond that is South Westmoreland Avenue. Immediately to the north are office uses, and farther to the north is West 5th Street.

The Project Site is currently occupied by the New Covenant Academy, a private school serving grades K–12. The Project Site is developed with a 12,800-square-foot “L-shaped” former church building (church building) that fronts West 6th Street that was originally constructed for the First English Evangelical Lutheran Church and currently used by the New Covenant Academy as a basketball court; a one-story school classroom building; a two-story classroom building; a restroom and storage facilities; and surface parking. The total amount of existing development on the Project Site is 18,547 square feet. Except for the existing former church building, all existing buildings on the Project Site would be demolished.

The Project consists of several components. On the northern portion of the Project Site, the Project would include a new 341 feet tall high-rise building containing 252 residential units. The northern portion of the Project Site also includes 2,507 square feet ground floor office uses. Four units would be townhome-style above the office uses. Additionally, of the 256 total dwelling units (252 in the tower and four town house units), 29 units, or approximately 11 percent, would be designated as restricted affordable housing for Extremely Low Income Households. While the townhouse and office uses would appear as a separate building than the residential tower, the uses are connected by subsurface parking. On the southern portion of the Project Site, the Project would include the reuse of the church building. This building would remain and be converted into 12,800 square feet of restaurant uses that would include an outdoor patio fronting West 6th Street.

In total, the Project would provide up to approximately 64,225 square feet of open space of which, 21,450 square feet would be Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) credited open space. Of this open space, the Project would provide 10,700 square feet of private balconies.

Up to approximately 329 vehicle parking spaces would be located within four subterranean levels and at the ground level. The subterranean parking would be located directly below the new residential and office components. Another 158 bicycle parking spaces would be provided on-site. Vehicle access to residential, office, and commercial parking and loading areas would be from one entrance along Shatto Place, located between the new tower, townhouses and offices, and the former church building, approximately midway down the property line. Overall, the Project would include approximately 222,944 square feet of total floor area (new building only) and has a floor-area ratio (FAR¹) of 4.25 to 1.

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1.2 Background Information on Senate Bill 375 and the SCEA

The State of California adopted Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), also known as “The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008,” which outlines growth strategies that better integrate regional land use and transportation planning and that help meet the State of California’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction mandates. SB 375 requires the State’s 18 metropolitan planning organizations to incorporate a “sustainable communities strategy” (SCS) into the regional transportation plans to achieve their respective region’s greenhouse gas emission reduction targets set by CARB. Correspondingly, SB 375 provides various California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) streamlining provisions for projects that are consistent with an adopted applicable SCS and meet certain objective criteria; one such CEQA streamlining tools is the SCEA.

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is the metropolitan planning organization for the County of Los Angeles (along with the Counties of Imperial, San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange, and Ventura). On April 7, 2016, SCAG’s Regional Council adopted the 2016–2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2016–2040 RTP/SCS).

¹ FAR expresses the relationship between the amount of useable floor area permitted in a building (or buildings) and the area of the lot on which the building stands. It is obtained by dividing the floor area of a building as defined by LAMC Section 12.03 by the buildable area of the lot.

For the SCAG region, CARB has set GHG emissions reduction targets at 8 percent below 2005 per capita emissions levels by 2020, and 13 percent below 2005 per capita emissions levels by 2035. The 2016–2040 RTP/SCS outlines strategies to meet or exceed the targets set by CARB. By Executive Order, approved June 28, 2016, CARB officially determined that the 2016–2040 RTP/SCS would achieve CARB’s 2020 and 2035 GHG emission reduction targets.

SB 375 allows the City, acting as lead agency, to prepare a SCEA as the environmental CEQA Clearance for “transit priority projects” (as described below) that are consistent with SCAG’s 2016–2040 RTP/SCS.

1.3 Transit Priority Project Criteria

SB 375 provides CEQA streamlining benefits to qualifying transit priority projects (TPPs). For purposes of projects in the SCAG region, a qualifying TPP is a project that meets the following four criteria (see PRC Section 21155 (a) and (b)):

1. Is consistent with the general use designation, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the project area in the SCAG 2016–2040 RTP/SCS;
2. Contains at least 50 percent residential use, based on total building square footage and, if the project contains between 26 percent and 50 percent nonresidential uses, a floor area ratio of not less than 0.75;
3. Provides a minimum net density of at least 20 dwelling units per acre; and
4. Is within one-half mile of a major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor included in a regional transportation plan.

1.4 SCEA Process and Streamlining Provisions

Qualifying TPPs that have incorporated all feasible mitigation measures, performance standards or criteria set forth in the prior applicable EIR (SCAG’s 2016–2040 RTP/SCS Program EIR) and that are determined to not result in significant and unavoidable environmental impacts may be approved with a SCEA. The specific substantive and procedural requirements for the approval of a SCEA include the following:

1. An initial study shall be prepared for a SCEA to identify all significant impacts or potentially significant impacts of the TPP, except for the following:
 - a. Growth-inducing impacts, and
 - b. Project-specific or cumulative impacts from cars and light trucks on global warming or the regional transportation network.

Note: All relevant and feasible 2016–2040 RTP/SCS Program EIR mitigation measures shall be incorporated into the Project prior to conducting the initial study analysis.

2. The initial study shall identify any cumulative impacts that have been adequately addressed and mitigated in a prior applicable certified EIR. Where the lead agency determines the impact has been adequately addressed and mitigated, the impact shall not be cumulatively considerable.

3. The SCEA shall contain mitigation measures that either avoid or mitigate to a level of insignificance all potentially significant or significant effects of the project required to be identified in the initial study.
4. A draft of the SCEA shall be circulated for a public comment period not less than 30 days, and the lead agency shall consider all comments received prior to acting on the SCEA.
5. The SCEA may be approved by the lead agency after the lead agency's legislative body conducts a public hearing, reviews comments received, and finds the following:
 - a. All potentially significant or significant effects required to be identified in the initial study have been identified and analyzed, and
 - b. With respect to each significant effect on the environment required to be identified in the initial study, either of the following apply:
 - i. Changes or alterations have been required in or incorporated into the project that avoid or mitigate the significant effects to a level of insignificance.
 - ii. Those changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and have been, or can and should be, adopted by that other agency.
6. The lead agency's decision to review and approve a TPP with a SCEA shall be reviewed under the substantial evidence standard.

1.5 Required Findings

Based on a review of the entire administrative record, the City finds that preparation of a SCEA in accordance with PRC Section 21155.2(b) is appropriate for the Project for the following reasons:

- The Project qualifies as a TPP pursuant to PRC Section 21155.
- The Project is consistent with the general use designations, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the area of the Project Sites in the 2016–2040 RTP/SCS prepared by SCAG.
- The Project contains more than 50 percent residential use; provides a minimum net density greater than 20 units an acre; and is within 0.5 mile of a major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor included in a regional transportation plan;
- The Project is a residential or mixed-use project as defined by PRC Section 21159.28(d);
- The Project incorporates all feasible mitigation measures, performance standards, or criteria set forth in the prior environmental reports and adopted findings made pursuant to PRC Section 21081, including the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Program Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR);
- All potentially significant or significant effects required to be identified and analyzed pursuant to CEQA in an initial study have been identified and analyzed in an initial study; and
- With respect to each significant effect on the environment required to be identified in the initial study, changes or alterations have been required in or incorporated into the Project that avoid or mitigate the significant effects to a level of less than significant.

1.6 Organization of the SCEA

Based on the information presented above, the SCEA for the Project is organized as follows:

- **Section 1. Introduction:** This section provides introductory information about the Project and background information regarding SB 375, lists the TPP criteria, and describes the required content of the SCEA.
- **Section 2. Project Description:** This section provides a detailed description of the environmental setting and the Project, including Project characteristics and environmental setting.
- **Section 3. SCEA Criteria and Transit Priority Project Consistency:** This section includes a discussion of the Project's consistency with the TPP criteria listed above and demonstrates that the Project satisfies all necessary criteria for approval of a SCEA as set forth in California PRC Sections 21155 and 21155.2. This section also identifies all of the mitigation measures contained in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) for SCAG's 2016–2040 RTP/SCS Program EIR and a discussion of the applicability of the mitigation measures to the Project.
- **Section 4. Initial Study Checklist:** This section contains the completed Initial Study Checklist and assesses the significant level under each environmental impact category.
- **Section 5. Sustainable Communities Environmental Impact Analysis:** Each environmental issue identified in the Initial Study Checklist contains an assessment and discussion of Project-specific and cumulative impacts associated with each subject area. Where the evaluation identifies potentially significant effects, as identified on the Checklist, mitigation measures are provided to reduce such impacts to less-than-significant levels.
- **Appendices:** Includes various documents, technical reports, and information used in preparation of the SCEA and can be found in the case file for ENV-2018-3986 at the Department of City Planning.

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