

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS**

#### **1. OVERVIEW OF THE CEQA PROCESS**

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code (PRC), Sections 21000-21177) requires that all public agencies within the State of California, having land use approval over project activities that have the potential to affect the quality of the environment, shall regulate such activities so that impacts to the environment can be prevented to the extent feasible. Such activity is reviewed and monitored through the CEQA process, as provided in the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Sections 15000-15387). CEQA distinguishes varied levels of documentation and public review based on a project's anticipated level of effect on the environment.

When it is determined through preliminary review that a project may likely have one or more significant effects upon the environment, then an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be prepared. The "scope" of the EIR may be determined through preparation of an Initial Study and a public scoping process. The EIR should consider both the potential project-specific (direct and indirect) and cumulative (in association with other related projects) environmental impacts that could result from the implementation of the proposed project.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15121, the EIR is primarily an informational document intended to inform the public agency decision-makers and the general public of the potentially significant effects of a proposed project. The EIR should disclose all known potentially significant impacts; identify feasible means to minimize or mitigate those effects; and, consider a number of reasonable alternatives to the project that might further reduce significant impacts while still attaining the project objectives. The decision-makers must consider the information in an EIR before taking action on the proposed project. The EIR may constitute substantial evidence in the record to support the agency's action on the project.

The EIR is prepared by or under the direction of the Lead Agency, which for the proposed Project is the City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning (Department of City Planning). The Department of City Planning is the public agency which has the primary responsibility for approving or carrying out the proposed Project. Further, Responsible Agencies, which are public agencies that have a level of discretionary approval over some component of the proposed Project, may rely upon the EIR prepared by the Department of City Planning.

An EIR is prepared in two key stages. First, a Draft EIR (DEIR) is prepared and distributed for public and agency review. Once comments on the Draft EIR are received, responses to those comments and any additional relevant project information are prepared and compiled in a Final EIR (FEIR). Both of these documents (i.e., the Draft EIR and the Final EIR), along with any related technical appendices, represent the complete record of the EIR. Throughout this document, the term EIR or Draft EIR may be used interchangeable since both are part of the ultimate EIR record; however, "Draft EIR" may be used specifically when referring to information provided specifically in that volume. Similarly, reference to the Final EIR may be in

reference to that separate volume or that stage of the EIR process and its collective documents. Technical Appendices may accompany either stage of the EIR, usually in a separate volume, and may be referenced as an independent volume or collectively as part of the either the Draft EIR or the Final EIR.

The Final EIR is used by the recommending bodies (i.e., Hearing Officer and City Planning Commission) and the final decision-makers (City Council) to weigh the environmental impacts against a proposed project in order to make an informed decision.

## **2. PROJECT EIR PROCESS**

This EIR has been prepared at the direction of and under the supervision of the Los Angeles Department of City Planning in accordance with CEQA and the Los Angeles CEQA Thresholds Guide (2006).

As discussed in *Section II: Project Description*, the proposed Project involves the subdivision of property presently occupied by the Weddington Golf & Tennis Club to create two separate lots. Lot 1 would allow for the continued operation of the 9-hole pitch-and-putt golf course and accompanying driving range and clubhouse. Lot 2 would be converted from tennis court uses to medium-density residential buildings for senior housing.

Based on the preliminary review and EIR scoping process (see *Section I.A.4: Introduction – Environmental Review Process – Preliminary Review and Notice of Preparation*, below), the Lead Agency determined that an EIR should be prepared because the implementation of the proposed Project may, either by itself and/or in conjunction with past, present and reasonably foreseeable future development in the Project vicinity, have significant environmental effects on some environmental issues.

For each significant impact identified in the EIR, the City must make findings and, if appropriate, prepare a statement of overriding considerations if the mitigation presented does not reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. Other Responsible Agencies, discussed in the following section, may also use this EIR in their discretionary approval of permits during the implementation process.

## **3. PROJECT APPROVAL AND INTENDED USES OF THIS EIR**

In accordance with CEQA and its implementing guidelines, the purpose of this EIR is to identify all potentially significant effects of the proposed Project on the physical environment, to determine the extent to which those effects can be reduced or avoided and to identify and evaluate feasible alternatives to the proposed Project. The City of Los Angeles will use this information when considering action on the proposed Project. The EIR itself is not a decision document and does not determine whether a project will be approved. Rather, the EIR is an informational and disclosure document to be taken under consideration during the decision-making process.

The City of Los Angeles, including its individual departments, and any Responsible Agencies providing approvals or permits, will use the information contained in this EIR while determining whether to grant permits and approvals as described in the preceding section. This EIR considers the physical construction effects due to demolition, grading and construction at the Project Site, as well as the operational change in land use associated with the proposed Project. The proposed Project may require approvals and permits as provided in *Table I-1: Required Approvals and Permits*.

**TABLE I-1**  
**REQUIRED APPROVALS AND PERMITS**

DISCRETIONARY APPROVAL OR PERMIT	PROJECT COMPONENT	AGENCY	AGENCY AUTHORITY
General Plan Amendment (“GPA”) to change the land use designation from Open Space to Medium Density Residential and remove the “Privately Owned Golf Course” symbol to permit medium-density senior housing land uses.	New Lot 2	City of Los Angeles	Lead Agency
Zone Change (“ZC”) to change zone from A1-1XL to R3-1, including height approval to permit the senior housing use at the R3 density and allow buildings up to 45 feet in height.	New Lot 2	City of Los Angeles	Lead Agency
Zone Variance (“ZV”) to permit a fence up to 100 feet in height for the driving range.	New Lot 1	City of Los Angeles	Lead Agency
Zone Variance (“ZV”) to allow the provision of 113 parking spaces for the adjoining golf course/driving range and the placement of a self-service retail hut (for range ball sales and vending machines) in the R3 zone.	New Lot 2	City of Los Angeles	Lead Agency
Conditional Use Permit (“CUP”) to allow the reconfigured pitch-and-putt golf course and driving range in the A1 zone and permit an over-in-height fence enclosure for the driving range within the required yard setbacks, as well as allow a temporary reduction in off-street parking during construction.	New Lot 1	City of Los Angeles	Lead Agency
Conditional Use Permit for Alcoholic Beverages (“CUB”) to permit the sale and dispensing of beer and wine in cafeterias/cafes within the common areas to residents and/or their guests for on-site consumption within the senior community.	New Lot 2	City of Los Angeles	Lead Agency
Tentative Tract Map (“TTM”) to subdivide the property and create two new lots (Lot 1 for the existing golf course and driving range uses and Lot 2 for 200 senior condominium units).	Project Site	City of Los Angeles	Lead Agency

**TABLE I-1 (CONTINUED)**  
**REQUIRED APPROVALS AND PERMITS**

DISCRETIONARY APPROVAL OR PERMIT	PROJECT COMPONENT	AGENCY	AGENCY AUTHORITY
Building Line Removal incident to the subdivision to remove the existing 18-foot building line along Whitsett Avenue.	Project Site	City of Los Angeles	Lead Agency
Revocable Permit to allow encroachment of existing non-structural golf course components (i.e., greens and fairways) into a City right-of-way along Valleyheart Drive and County right-of-way along the Los Angeles River.	New Lot 1	City of Los Angeles County of Los Angeles	Lead Agency and Responsible Agency
Site Plan Review for the senior housing project.	New Lot 2	City of Los Angeles	Lead Agency
Haul Route Permit to export approximately 82,000 cubic yards of earth from the site related to grading for the subterranean parking and demolition of sixteen tennis courts.	New Lot 2	City of Los Angeles	Lead Agency
Other incidental permits as required for construction and implementation of the project, including grading permits, demolition permits, building permits, B-Permits, etc.	New Lot 1 New Lot 2	City Los Angeles	Lead Agency

**4. PRELIMINARY REVIEW AND NOTICE OF PREPARATION**

In compliance with the CEQA Guidelines, the Department of City Planning completed a preliminary review of the proposed Project and determined that an EIR would be required. Because the Department of City Planning, as Lead Agency, determined that preparation of an EIR was evident, and pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15063, an Initial Study was not required. In the absence of an Initial Study, scoping of the EIR was established through agency input and the public scoping process, which included circulation of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) and conductance of Scoping meetings.

The proposed Project was initially proposed in 2001, at which time the Department of City Planning determined that an EIR would be required. Subsequent to the initial proposal, the Project was postponed and reconfigured to address various environmental and community concerns, and to accommodate implementation and construction of the City of Los Angeles Fire Station No. 78 at the southeast corner of the property. A more detailed discussion of the Project background is provided in *Section II.C: Project Description – Background* of this Draft EIR. Under previous, but similar Project designs, NOPs and Notices of Scoping Meeting were issued on February 22, 2002, May 8, 2003, January 4, 2007, and March 6, 2007 to solicit public comments on potential environmental issues for the Project. The public scoping meetings for the Project were held on March 6, 2002, January 18, 2007 and March 20, 2007. To accommodate additional public concerns, the proposed Project was revised again and the NOP was issued on

April 17, 2008 and recirculated to reflect the new project description, which is essentially equivalent to the current proposed Project described in this EIR.

The NOP for the proposed Project was distributed to responsible and interested agencies/persons on April 17, 2008 for a 30-day review period (ending May 19, 2008) as required by CEQA, to solicit comments on the proposed scope of the EIR. Written comments were received on the NOP and have been reviewed and incorporated or discussed in this Draft EIR. Several comments were received after the due date of the NOP, but these comments have still been accepted and incorporated for discussion in this Draft EIR. It should be noted that the City of Los Angeles determined that there was no need to re-issue or recirculate a new NOP for the current Project as it is substantially similar to the project described in the 2008 NOP. A copy of the 2008 NOP is included in *Appendix A: A-1: Notice of Preparation (NOP)* of this Draft EIR. Responses to the 2008 NOP were received from the following and are included in *Appendix A: A-2: NOP Written Comment Letters*:

#### Federal and State Agencies

- California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG)
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
- California Legislature Assembly, Office of Mike Feuer
- California Legislature Assembly, Office of Lloyd E. Levine
- California Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC)
- California Office of Planning and Research (OPR), State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit
- California State Senate, Office of Shiela James Kuehl
- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC)
- United States House of Representatives, Office of Representative Howard L. Berman

#### Regional, County, and Local Agencies

- City of Los Angeles, Bureau of Sanitation
- City of Los Angeles, City Council District No. 2, Office of Wendy Greuel
- City of Los Angeles, Department of Water and Power (DWP)
- City of Los Angeles, Fire Department (LAFD)
- County of Los Angeles, Department of Public Works (DPW), Land Development Division
- Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro)
- South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD)
- Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)

#### Organizations, Special Interest Groups and Interested Individuals

- Friends of the Los Angeles River
- Los Angeles Audubon Society
- Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition
- Los Angeles Tennis Association (LATA)

- Southern California Tennis Association (SCTA)
- Studio City Residents Association (SCRA)
- Approximately 240 individuals

A number of written public comments were received in 2002 and 2003 (included in *Appendix A: A-2: NOP Written Comment Letters*) and were also considered in this Draft EIR. Based on the scoping process, current conditions and public input, this Draft EIR is focused on the following topical issue sections:

Aesthetics	Section IV.A
Air Quality	Section IV.B
Biological Resources	Section IV.C
Cultural Resources	Section IV.D
Geology, Soils, and Seismicity	Section IV.E
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Section IV.F
Hydrology and Water Quality	Section IV.G
Land Use and Planning	Section IV.H
Noise	Section IV.I
Population and Housing	Section IV.J
Public Services: Fire Protection	Section IV.K.1
Public Services: Police Protection	Section IV.K.2
Public Services: Library	Section IV.K.3
Recreation and Parks	Section IV.L
Transportation and Circulation	Section IV.M
Utilities: Energy	Section IV.N.1
Utilities: Water	Section IV.N.2

This EIR includes analysis of the above environmental issues, identifies potential physical impacts and recommends mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant adverse impacts. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15128, other possible effects of the Project, which were determined to be not significant through the preliminary review and NOP scoping process, are not discussed in detail in this EIR. Those possible effects that did not warrant detailed analyses are identified in *Section VI: Other Environmental Considerations* of this Draft EIR.

## 5. REVIEW OF THE DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR is being distributed to responsible and other affected agencies, surrounding jurisdictions, interested parties, and others who requested a copy of the document in accordance with PRC Section 21092. The Notice of Completion (“NOC”) of this Draft EIR is also being distributed as required by CEQA. The Draft EIR will be available for public review for not less than 45 days, pursuant to Section 15105 of the State CEQA Guidelines. During this public review period, the Draft EIR including its technical appendices is available for review at the following locations:

Los Angeles Department of City Planning Major Projects Valley Section 6262 Van Nuys Boulevard, Suite 351 Van Nuys, CA 91401	Los Angeles Department of City Planning Major Projects Section City Hall, 200 N. Spring Street, Room 750 Los Angeles, CA 90012
North Hollywood Regional Library 5211 Tujunga Avenue North Hollywood, CA 91601	Central Library 630 W. 5 <sup>th</sup> Street Los Angeles, CA 90071
Studio City Branch Library 12511 Moorpark Street Studio City, CA 91604	

Written comments on the Draft EIR should be addressed to Adam Villani at the Environmental Analysis Section of the Department of City Planning (Lead Agency) at the following address:

Attention: Adam Villani  
Los Angeles Department of City Planning  
Major Projects Section  
City Hall, 200 N. Spring Street, Room 750  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Upon completion of the 45-day public review period and conclusion of public hearings on the Project, written responses will be prepared and incorporated into the Final EIR to address comments received on the Draft EIR and will be made available for review at least ten days prior to when certification of the EIR is considered by the City of Los Angeles Planning Commission and ultimately the City Council. These environmental comments and their responses will be included as part of the environmental record for consideration by the decision-makers for the Project and will constitute the Final EIR.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### B. ORGANIZATION OF THIS EIR

This Draft EIR conforms to the content requirements stated in Sections 15120 through 15130 of the State CEQA Guidelines. A list of the overall document sections and a brief description of their content is provided here to assist the reader in locating information.

**Section 0: Executive Summary:** Located at the front of this document, the Executive Summary provides a brief description of the Project, including an overview of the impact analysis, recommended mitigation measures, and net residual impact. Summary information of alternatives and key conclusions are also provided.

**Section I: Introduction:** The Introduction provides a general orientation to the purpose of CEQA and this Draft EIR, including the scoping of this Draft EIR, availability of documents, and review process.

**Section II: Project Description:** Section II presents a statement of the Project objectives, a detailed description of the proposed Project's physical development characteristics, and related information on phasing and implementation.

**Section III: General Overview and Environmental Setting:** This section discusses the location and general characteristics of the Project Site within a regional-setting context. It also provides an overview of the site-specific environmental setting and characteristics of the immediate surrounding area.

**Section IV: Environmental Impact Analysis:** This section analyzes the potential impacts from implementation of the Project, including actions anticipated from the demolition, construction, operational, and maintenance phases of the Project. The impact discussion is organized by topical environmental issues as outlined by Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines. Relevant background information has been summarized and a Project-specific level of analysis is provided to address implementation of the Project. Mitigation Measures are recommended as necessary.

**Section V: Alternatives:** The Alternatives section includes a discussion and analysis of potential and feasible alternatives to the Project pursuant to Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines. Alternatives are analyzed that would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the Project, but may avoid or lessen any of the significant effects of the Project. The comparative merits of each alternative are evaluated.

**Section VI: Other Environmental Considerations:** Section VI evaluates the contextual impacts related to growth-inducing effects and cumulative growth. Impacts found not to be significant, unavoidable adverse impacts, and irreversible impacts are also summarized in this section.

**Section VII: Persons and Organizations Consulted:** Section VII lists persons that directly contributed to the preparation of this Draft EIR.

**Section VIII: References:** This section includes a listing of source information referenced for the analyses contained within this Draft EIR.