
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) evaluates the potential environmental effects that could result from the renovation of the 16,340 square foot Swan Hall and construction of a connecting 22,663 square foot building addition. The project would accommodate faculty offices that are currently located in the under-sized Swan Hall Building. The renovation and addition would allow for meeting rooms and other facilities to facilitate faculty and student communication.

This Draft EIR has been prepared in conformance with state and City of Los Angeles environmental policy guidelines for the implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

1.1 Background and Project Overview

In 2004, Occidental College initiated a master planning effort for the campus. A Specific Plan and associated Draft EIR were published in November 2008, a Final EIR including Revised Draft Specific plan was published in July 2009. In December 2009, Occidental College decided to reevaluate its approach to campus planning and withdrew its Specific Plan and associated applications.

Occidental College is currently reevaluating campus needs and anticipates this effort will eventually lead to a new Facilities Master Plan. However, the content and scope of that plan is not currently known or foreseeable.

Founded in 1887, Occidental College is one of the oldest colleges in Southern California. An accredited private college of the liberal arts and sciences, Occidental College has been at its current location in the Eagle Rock community of the City of Los Angeles since 1914. Spanning over 120 acres in the hills of northeast Los Angeles, the Occidental College campus consists of 53 major buildings. Occidental College is located in an area developed with several urban uses, including residential development, a public high school and a park. On-campus housing is comprised of 13 residence halls that serve as the focus of many educational, cultural and social activities. All students are required to live on campus for their first three years. Almost three-quarters of the students live on campus for all four years, thereby greatly diminishing daily automobile traffic to and from the campus. Currently at Occidental College, there are approximately 1,990 students and approximately 260 faculty and 435 staff. The College operates on a traditional school year where educational activities and staffing are reduced during the summer months.

The main campus is generally bounded by Campus Road on the north, west and south. To the east, the campus is bordered by private homes accessed from Coringa Drive and Avenues 50 and 51. The campus can be roughly divided into three areas, the largest being the “historic core” consisting of the original campus buildings, including 19 buildings designed by master architect Myron Hunt and built between 1912 and 1940. These 19 buildings designed by Myron Hunt, include Swan Hall. These buildings traditionally formed the core of the campus and continue to do so today. On the whole the buildings have remained largely unaltered over time, with the

exception of the Alumni Gymnasium and the Taylor Pool, both of which were remodeled twice in 1965 and again in 1997.

The remainder of the campus outside the “historic core” is divided into two areas. The first is known as the “new campus” which consists of buildings and facilities built since 1960 including new sports facilities to meet NCAA requirements, new residence halls, and research and classroom facilities that could not be accommodated in the original campus buildings. The second area consists of steeper hillside lands that do not currently have easy, direct access from the main campus. Occidental College also owns and currently utilizes several buildings immediately adjacent to the main campus that are used primarily for faculty housing, staff offices, and alumni functions and activities.

1.2 Purpose and Legal Authority

In accordance with *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15121(a), the purpose of an EIR is to serve as an informational document that will generally inform public agency decision makers and the public of the potentially significant environmental effects of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project. *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15151 contains the following standards for EIR adequacy:

An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decisionmakers 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 should 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.

An EIR is an informational document for use by decision makers and the public in their review of the potential impacts of a proposed project, as well as in the evaluation of alternatives and mitigation measures which may minimize, avoid, or eliminate those impacts. As such, this document includes a full discussion of the project description, the existing environmental setting, environmental impacts, mitigation measures, and residual impacts that may exist after mitigation has been implemented, and project alternatives that could alleviate potential impacts.

To gain the most value from this report certain key points recommended in the *CEQA Guidelines* should be kept in mind:

- This report should be used as a tool to give the reader an overview of the possible ramifications of the proposed project. It is designed as an “early warning system” with regard to potential environmental impacts and subsequent effects on the local community’s natural resources; and
- A specific environmental impact is not necessarily irreversible or permanent. Incorporating changes recommended in this report during the design and construction phases of project development can wholly or partially mitigate most impacts, particularly in more developed urban areas.

As the public agency with the authority to approve or deny the proposed project, the City of Los Angeles Planning Department, which is the Lead Agency, will consider the information in the

EIR along with other information before taking any action on the proposed project. The conclusions of the EIR regarding environmental impacts do not control the City of Los Angeles' discretion to approve, deny or modify the proposed project, but instead are presented as information intended to aid the decision-making process.

1.3 Draft EIR Organization

As illustrated in **Table 1-1**, this Draft EIR is organized into eight chapters each dealing with a separate aspect of the required content of an EIR as described in the *CEQA Guidelines*. To help the reader locate information of particular interest, a brief summary of the contents of each chapter of the EIR is provided. The following chapters are contained within the EIR:

**TABLE 1-1:
REQUIRED DRAFT EIR CONTENTS**

Requirement/CEQA Guidelines Section	Location in Draft EIR
Table of contents (Section 15122)	Table of Contents
Summary (Section 15123)	Executive Summary
Project Description (Section 15124)	Chapter 2 and Chapters 3A
Environmental Setting (Section 15125)	Chapters 3A
Significant environmental impacts (Section 15126.2 (a))	Chapters 3A
Unavoidable significant environmental impacts (Section 15126.2 (b))	Chapter 5
Mitigation measures (Section 15126.4)	Chapters 3A
Cumulative impacts (Section 15130)	Chapters 3A
Alternatives to the proposed project (Section 15126.6)	Chapter 4
Growth-inducing impacts (Section 15126.2 (d))	Chapter 5
Effects found not to be significant (Section 15128)	Chapter 5
References (Section 15129)	Throughout
List of preparers; organizations and persons consulted (Section 15129)	Chapter 6
Acronyms and abbreviations	Throughout

Executive Summary: This section contains an overview of the scope of the EIR, as well as a summary of the proposed project, environmental impacts, proposed mitigation, level of significance after mitigation, and unavoidable impacts. Also contained within this section is a summary description of project alternatives.

Chapter 1. Introduction: This chapter provides an overview of the purpose and use of the EIR, the scope of this EIR, the environmental review process for the EIR and the proposed project, and the general format of the document.

Chapter 2. Project Description: This chapter defines the project location, summarizes the proposed project, and outlines the project objectives and the need for the project.

Chapter 3. Environmental Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures: This chapter describes and evaluates the one environmental issue area identified as potentially significantly impacted by the project. The analysis includes existing environmental setting and background, applicable environmental thresholds, environmental impacts (both short-term and long-term), policy considerations related to the particular environmental issue area under analysis, mitigation measures capable of minimizing environmental harm, and a discussion of cumulative impacts.

Chapter 4. Alternatives Analysis: This chapter analyzes feasible alternatives to the proposed project and identifies the Environmentally Superior Alternative. The two alternatives analyzed in this EIR consist of the No Project Alternative and the Less Dense Development Alternative.

Chapter 5. Other CEQA Considerations: This chapter provides a summary of the proposed project's potential growth-inducing impacts; provides a list of proposed project impacts that are significant and unavoidable by issue area; discusses the environmental effects of the proposed project found not to be significant; and identifies any irreversible changes to the natural environment resulting from the proposed project.

Chapter 6. Report Preparation: This chapter identifies the public and private agencies and individuals contacted during the preparation of this report, and all individuals responsible for the preparation of this report.

Appendices: Data supporting the analysis or content of the EIR are provided in the appendices to the document. These include the Notice of Preparation / Initial Study (NOP/IS) and responses received; the 2003 Cultural Resources Report for the campus and the Swan Hall Rehabilitation and Addition, Historic Resource Impact Assessment are also Appendices that are available on-line as well as at City offices (200 N. Spring Street, Suite 750).

1.4 EIR Process

As described in Section 15143 of the *CEQA Guidelines*:

The EIR shall focus on the significant effects on the environment. The significant effects should be discussed with emphasis in proportion to their severity and probability of occurrence. Effects dismissed in an Initial Study as clearly insignificant and unlikely to occur need not be discussed further in the EIR unless the Lead Agency subsequently receives information inconsistent with the finding in the Initial Study.

As a first step in complying with the procedural requirements of CEQA, the City of Los Angeles prepared a Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Initial Study to determine whether any aspect of the project, either individually or cumulatively, could cause a significant effect on the environment and, if so, to narrow the focus (or scope) of the environmental analysis.

In compliance with CEQA, the City of Los Angeles completed a multi-step process to determine the appropriate scope of issues to be examined in this Draft EIR. The City filed the NOP with the State Clearinghouse (SCH No. 2010041044) in the Office of Planning and Research as an indication that an EIR would be prepared. A copy of the NOP and an Initial Study Checklist are included in **Appendix A** of this EIR. The NOP was distributed to involved public agencies and interested parties for a 30-day public review period, which began on April 14, 2010, and ended on May 14, 2010. The purpose of the public review period was to solicit comments on the scope and content of the environmental analysis to be included in the EIR. The City of Los Angeles received comments in response to the NOP, and these comments are also included in Appendix A of this EIR.

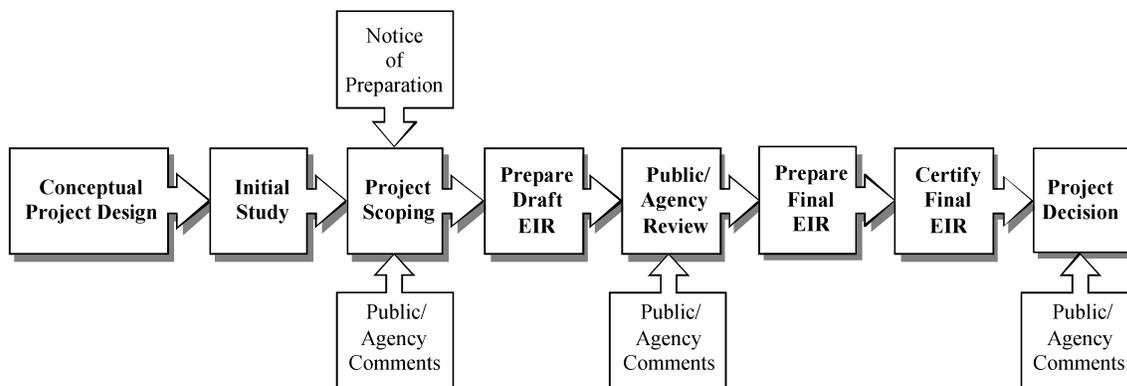
The Initial Study concluded that the project could have a significant impact on historic resources. The Initial Study further determined that other issues would not be significantly impacted by the project (see **Appendix A**), and therefore this EIR addresses only the issue anticipated to be significantly impacted by the project. During the preparation of the EIR, agencies, organizations, and persons whom the City believed might have an interest in this proposed project were specifically contacted. Information, data, and observations from these contacts are included in the EIR. Agencies or interested persons who did not respond during the public review period of the

NOP will have an opportunity to comment during the public review period of the Draft EIR, as well as at subsequent hearings on the proposed project.

This EIR has been prepared to meet all of the substantive and procedural requirements of CEQA (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.), the *CEQA Guidelines* (California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.). Accordingly, the City of Los Angeles is the Lead Agency for this proposed project, taking primary responsibility for conducting the environmental review and approving or denying the project.

Any environmental impacts that cannot be mitigated to a less than significant level are considered to be significant and unavoidable. If a public agency approves a project that has significant and unavoidable impacts, the agency must state in writing the specific reasons for approving the project, based on the Final EIR and any other information in the public record for the project. This is termed a “statement of overriding considerations,” which is used to explain the specific reasons why the benefits of a proposed project make its unavoidable environmental effects acceptable. The statement is prepared, if required, after the Final EIR has been completed, yet before action to approve the project has been taken.

A graphic description of the EIR preparation process is provided in the following flow chart:



1.5 Availability of the Draft EIR

This Draft EIR has been distributed to affected agencies, surrounding cities, counties, and interested parties for a 45-day review period in accordance with Section 15087 of the *CEQA Guidelines*. During the 45-day review period, which commences on October 7, 2010, 2010 and ends on November 22, 2010, the Draft EIR is available for general public review at the following locations:

Diana Kitching
 Environmental Review Coordinator
 City of Los Angeles
 Department of City Planning
 200 Spring Street, Room 750
 Los Angeles, CA 90012
 Telephone: (213) 978-1351
 E-Mail: Diana.Kitching@lacity.org

Central Library
630 W. 5th Street,
Los Angeles, CA 90071

Eagle Rock Branch Library
5027 Caspar Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90041
Telephone: (323) 248-8078

Arroyo Seco Regional Branch Library
6145 N. Figueroa Street
Los Angeles, CA 90042
Telephone: (323) 255-0537

Atwater Village Branch Library
3379 Glendale Blvd,
Los Angeles, CA 90039

Eagle Rock City Hall
2035 Colorado Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90041-1238

Additionally, the Draft EIR can be downloaded or reviewed via the Internet at the Department of City Planning's website [<http://planning.lacity.org/> (click on "Environmental" and then "Draft Environmental Impact Reports")]. The DEIRs can be purchased on cd-rom for \$7.50 per copy. Contact **Diana Kitching** of the City of Los Angeles at **Diana.Kitching@lacity.org** to purchase one.

Interested parties may provide written comments on the Draft EIR. Written comments on the Draft EIR must be postmarked by November 22, 2010 and should be addressed to:

Diana Kitching
Los Angeles City Planning Department
200 Spring Street, Room 750
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Comments may also be submitted electronically to Diana Kitching at Diana.Kitching@lacity.org. Upon completion of the 45-day public review period, written responses to all comments on environmental issues discussed in the Draft EIR will be prepared and incorporated into the Final EIR. These comments, and their responses, will be included in the Final EIR for consideration by the City of Los Angeles Planning Commission and City Council, as well as other public decision makers.