
CHAPTER 2: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 Introduction

This Draft EIR has been prepared to evaluate environmental impacts that could result from the renovation of the 16,340 square foot (sq. ft.) Swan Hall and construction of a 22,700 square foot addition.

The City of Los Angeles, as the Lead Agency, has the authority to prepare this Draft EIR and, after the comment/response process, act upon certification of the Final EIR and make a decision as to whether to approve the proposed project. The City and responsible agencies have the authority to make decisions on discretionary actions relating to the proposed project. This EIR is intended to serve as an informational document to be considered by the City and responsible agencies during deliberations on the proposed project to evaluate the proposed project's impact on the environment.

2.2 Project Setting

The project is located on the Occidental College campus in the Eagle Rock community of the City of Los Angeles (see **Figure 2-1**). Eagle Rock is a hilly and primarily residential community located within the northeast area of the City of Los Angeles. The cities of Pasadena and South Pasadena are located to the east, and the City of Glendale is located to the west; the Verdugo Hills are located to the north, and the communities of Highland Park and Glassell Park to the south. Originally established as a suburban city in 1911, Eagle Rock was annexed by the City of Los Angeles in 1923.

Occidental College is a nationally-recognized and accredited four-year liberal arts college located in Eagle Rock at 1600 Campus Road, at the intersection of Campus Road and Alumni Avenue. The project site is roughly circumscribed by Campus Road. The College is located approximately five miles northeast of downtown Los Angeles and less than one mile east of the Glendale Freeway (State Route 2). Ventura Freeway (State Route 134) is located approximately one mile north.

Founded in 1887, Occidental College has been at its current location since 1914. The campus currently includes 53 buildings located on approximately 120 acres. The college also owns and uses a number of buildings immediately adjacent to the main campus that are primarily used for faculty housing, and staff offices.

In Spring 2010 (the time the NOP was issued for this Draft EIR) there were 1,989 students¹ enrolled at the college; the college employed 257 faculty and 433 staff. Occidental College is an Educational Institution as defined by Section 12.03 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC).²

¹ In accordance with current permits Occidental is allowed up to 2,000 students. The project would not increase student enrollment, faculty or staff.

² According to Section 12.03 of the LAMC, Education Institutions are defined as “[c]olleges or universities supported wholly or in part by public funds and other colleges or universities giving general academic instruction as prescribed by the State Board of Education.”

Figure 2-1 Project Location Map

As shown in **Figure 2-1** and described below, the Occidental College campus is located in an urbanized area surrounded primarily by residential and institutional land uses located along the major roadways bordering the site. The Swan Hall project site is located in the middle of the campus north to south and in western third of the campus west to east. The following land uses are located in the immediate vicinity of the College:

- North and Northwest: Primarily single-family residential land uses and undeveloped open space are located north of the project site, along the north side of Campus Road. Single-family homes are also located along Ridgeview Avenue and Escarpa Drive, which are perpendicular to Campus Road.
- South: Single-family residential land uses are located south of the project site along the south side of Campus Road; and along the southern perimeter of the campus, along Avenue 50 and 51, Eaton Street, Coringa Drive, Rangeview Avenue, Avenue 49, Armdale Avenue, Munson Avenue, and Avenue 47.
- East: Single-family residential land uses are located east of the project site along the campus boundary. Yosemite Park and Yosemite Recreation Center, located at 1840 Yosemite Drive; and the 3,000-student Eagle Rock High School, located at 1750 Yosemite Drive, are located along the northeastern perimeter. Residential uses located along Townsend Street are also located along the eastern perimeter.
- West: Directly west of the project site (along the west side of Campus Road) are additional single-family residential land uses. These homes face Westdale Avenue, Corliss Street, Paulhan Avenue, Alumni Avenue, and Hazelwood Avenue. Further west, between two and three blocks of the project site, multiple-family residential and commercial land uses such as restaurants, small offices, and retail stores are located along Eagle Rock Boulevard.

The original Master Plan for the Occidental campus was designed by Myron Hunt, an architect based in Pasadena, who was also responsible for designing all campus buildings between 1911 and 1940.³ Although none are designated as landmarks by the City of Los Angeles or by the state, according to a 2003 Cultural Resources Study completed by Jones & Stokes⁴ 17 buildings and six other features at Occidental College constitute a potential historic district that appears to meet the criteria for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources. The 2003 Cultural Resources Study identified a potential Historic District for the campus (see **Figure 2-2**).

The Swan Hall building is located in the western third of the campus and in the middle of the campus north to south. It abuts the formal Quadrangle that comprised the center of campus when the campus was first developed. The building is surrounded by a number of large trees including three large eucalyptus trees on the addition site that are proposed to be removed. In general the trees on the site and in the area provide a lush landscaped context for the building. In addition trees in the quadrangle (and surrounding area) tend to obscure the building from a number of vantage points. **Figures 2-3** through **2-6** show photographs of Swan Hall and surrounds.

³ In association with architect, Elmer Gray, Mr. Hunt's work also included a Master Plan and Bridges Hall of Music at Pomona College, the Rose Bowl, buildings at the California Institute of Technology, and several prominent civic buildings and private homes in Pasadena, Los Angeles, and San Marino, as well as encampments at March Air Force Base outside the City of Riverside and Camp Pendleton south of San Clemente.

⁴ Cultural Resources Study, September 2003, Jones and Stokes. This document is Appendix B to this EIR and is on file and available for review at the Planning Department, Environmental Review Section, City Hall, Room 750.

Figure 2-2



Figure 2-3: View of Swan Hall from Quadrangle from the Southeast



Figure 2-4: View of Swan Hall from Quadrangle from the Northeast



Figure 2-5: View of Swan Hall and Addition Site from the Southeast

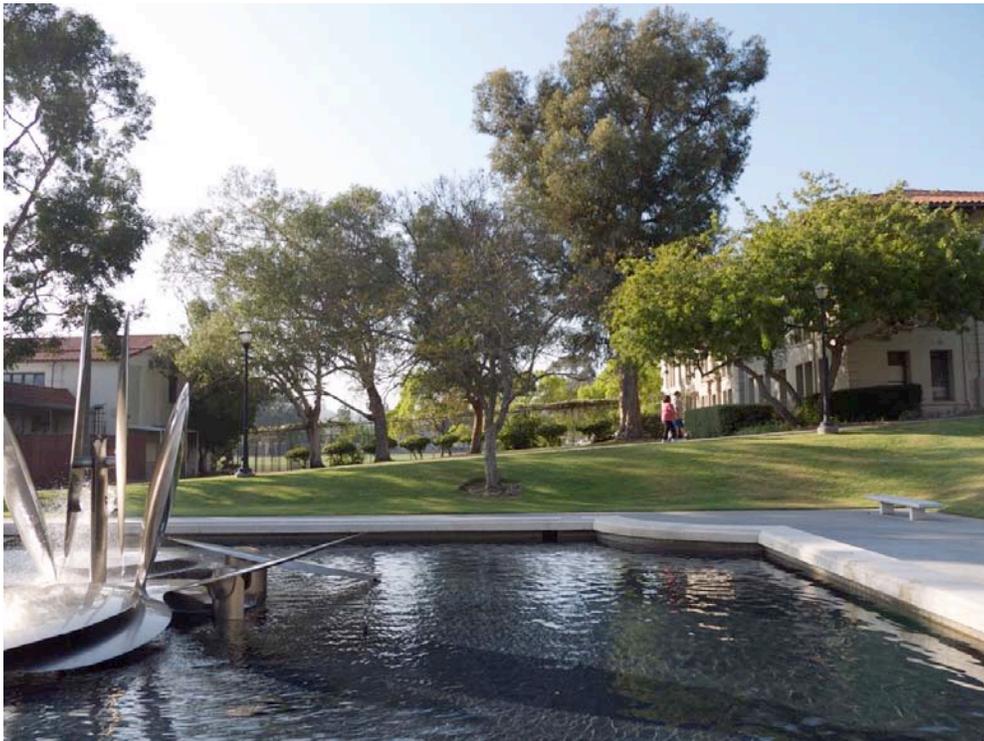


Figure 2-6: View of Swan Hall (to the right) and Addition Site from the Fountain to the South

2.3 Project Objectives

The proposed project, which consists of the renovation of Swan Hall and construction of a connecting building and addition, is guided by the following goals and objectives:

- To address seismic safety concerns associated with a building that is nearly 100 years old.
- To remodel, reconfigure and renovate a dysfunctional building in order to improve accessibility and support the campus need for faculty offices and lounge areas, modern teaching facilities including seminar rooms, flexible instruction areas, informal meeting spaces, and new/expanded psychology experiment and interview rooms.
- To preserve the historic Swan Hall Building in a cost effective manner that will allow it to be a vital part of campus operations while maintaining the appearance of the historic quadrangle located east of Swan Hall. Occidental College has and will continue to seek to maintain the historic character of its Myron Hunt buildings while ensuring that its programmatic needs are met.
- To provide additional faculty offices and meeting space in a building that encourages and supports communication between faculty and students in a pleasant and efficient manner.
- To abate hazardous lead paint and asbestos present in building materials.
- To undertake renovation activities in a timely manner in order to allow faculty and staff to move back in to the building as quickly as possible.
- To meet sustainability objectives for the campus by designing the renovation and addition to meet LEED Silver Standards.

2.4 Project Characteristics

The existing Swan Hall is a 16,340 square foot, 3-story building (two stories on the east and three stories on the west) with partial basement built in 1914 by master architect Myron Hunt as one of the first buildings on the Occidental College campus. Swan Hall is one of the original campus buildings designed by Myron Hunt, who developed a very personal style of architecture influenced by the Spanish Revival movement. Hunt's Spanish/Californian style formed the basis for the early development of the campus. Originally designed as a dormitory, Swan Hall was remodeled and repurposed in 1960 as a faculty office building. Today, Swan Hall houses six academic departments and fully one-third of Occidental's faculty, some of who work in converted sleeping porches and storage spaces.

The renovation of Swan Hall will provide a necessary seismic upgrade and provide full ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)-compliant accessibility for the first time. Currently, most of the building is inaccessible to the physically challenged. The existing office space is substandard; the renovation will provide modern offices of adequate size for existing faculty and staff, along with seminar rooms, flexible instruction areas, informational meeting spaces, and new psychology labs. No new faculty or staff is being added. Air conditioning will be provided for the first time.

The proposed addition of 22,663 square feet of floor area in the new three-story wing will incorporate a design and scale similar to, but distinct from, the original Swan Hall. The expansion allows for modern offices and other spaces of adequate size for existing faculty and staff. Spacious and flexible convening areas that will enhance the campus community, including a faculty commons and an outdoor terrace, are among the new amenities. In addition, the expansion provides a new venue for intellectual discourse and distinguished invited speakers and guests. Faculty lounges, a faculty dining room and a reading room are added programs to facilitate the collegial atmosphere of the Swan Hall complex.

The new addition is proposed to be sited on a grassy area adjacent to the west side of the existing Swan Hall. The major portion of the addition is held back from the existing building 26 feet and placed 20 feet north of the existing sidewalk to maximize views of Swan Hall, including view angles from Alumni Road. A linking element between the buildings has been designed to be lower than the roof elevation of Swan Hall.

The existing two- to three-story Swan Hall, which contains a partial basement, reaches an overall height of 34 feet from grade at the ground floor to the top of the roof. The new three-story addition, which contains a basement, would reach an overall height of 49 feet 3 inches from grade at the ground floor to the top of the roof. The addition is being located on a sloping grade that slopes downward and away from existing Swan Hall. The vertical height difference between the roof of existing Swan Hall and the new addition would be about 10 feet.

The proposed renovation and expansion of Swan Hall is designed to remain true to Occidental College's initial vision of providing an intimate collegiate setting nestled within a residential community. The proposed project is compatible and complementary to the college's site layout and architectural design.

The addition to Swan Hall increases the overall building area on the Occidental College campus by no more than 1.97% and would not affect campus population.

As noted above, Swan Hall is a 16,340 square foot, three-story building with partial basement built in 1914 by master architect Myron Hunt as one of the first buildings on the Occidental College campus. Recognizing the historic nature of the building, Occidental College proposes to renovate the existing building as well as add 22,663 square feet of additional floor area. The original hollow clay tile walls of Swan Hall will be replaced with a new gunite shell, and the multiple floor planes in the middle section of the building will be realigned with the side wings to provide better through-access, as well as provide additional structural reinforcement.

Due to Swan Hall's character and its architectural significance to the "historic core" of the Occidental College campus, careful documentation in an architectural survey of all exterior details, treatments and conditions would be made prior to work on the building so that following construction, the exterior will appear to be a restored version of the original building. All existing door and window openings would be cleaned of lead paint and reconditioned prior to reinstallation. Existing roof rafter tails and roof tile would be restored to their original appearance. All door opening surrounds would be evaluated for removal, rehabilitation and re-use, or cast and simulated to match the original surround.

The new 22,663 square feet of floor area in the Addition connecting to Swan Hall is not intended to be a direct copy of all of the original building's details and treatments, rather it is designed using much of the same architectural massing and proportion philosophy of Swan Hall, which allows the original building to stand as a distinct structure, while the addition is complementary

and representative of the original. Occidental College seeks to construct a project that respects the architectural integrity of the “historic core” of the campus, in keeping with the Spanish/Californian style of Myron Hunt that formed the basis of the architectural style of the early development of Occidental College.

In summary, with regard to historic preservation, the key features of the project are as follows:

- Renovation of Swan Hall’s structural system and reconstruction of the exterior. The exterior facades would be removed and replaced with new materials. The existing windows (frame and sash) and doors would be removed and salvaged for repair and reuse. The roof tile would be removed and re-installed.
- Swan Hall’s interior circulation system would be reconfigured. In the building’s interior, the multiple floor planes in the middle section of the building would be realigned to match the side wings to provide better through-access, as well as provide additional structural reinforcement. Existing staircases would be retained.
- The three-story building addition structure (plus basement) would be located 26 feet west of Swan Hall in what is currently a grassy area with large trees. The 22,663 square foot structure would appear 10 feet taller than Swan Hall, and would occupy a slightly larger site area than Swan Hall. The addition would be connected to Swan Hall at the center of Swan’s west façade by a somewhat narrower (30 feet wide) connecting structure, resulting in the middle third of the west façade of Swan Hall being covered by this connecting structure. The connecting structure would overlap the roofline of the original building.

A more detailed listing of character defining features of Swan Hall and proposed changes to these features is included in Chapter 3. **Figures 2-7** through **2-15** provide a site plan, and typical floor plan (second floor) as well as building elevations and renderings

2.5 Schedule

It is anticipated that the start of construction would be in early 2011 with completion of the renovation and addition in 2013.

2.6 Discretionary Actions

This EIR is intended to inform decision-makers and the public of the environmental effects of implementing the proposed project and of the mitigation measures or available alternatives that could reduce or avoid significant impacts. This EIR analyzes and documents the impacts of the proposed project and all discretionary and ministerial actions associated with the project. The City, as Lead Agency, will use this EIR in assessing the effects of the City actions detailed below. The discretionary approvals required to implement the proposed project include the following:

- Review and Certification of the EIR and review and recommendation regarding the project approvals by the City Planning Commission
- Review and certification of the EIR by the City Council as appropriate
- Approval of a Conditional Use Permit for an Educational Institution in an R1 Zone pursuant to LAMC Section 12.24 U 6. Pursuant to LAMC Section 12.08 A 6, educational institutions are permitted in the R1 Zone under a Conditional Use Permit.

Figure 2-7

Figure 2-8

Figure 2-9

Figure 2-10

Figure 2-11

Figure 2-12

Figure 2-13

Figure 2-14

Figure 2-15

Figure 2-16

- Haul route permit for exporting up to 2,800 cubic yards of soil off the site and importing up to 1,300 cubic yards on to the site.
- Approval of other ancillary permits that may be necessary, including, but not limited to, building permits, grading permits, and public improvement permits.

2.7 Cumulative Development

Cumulative impacts refer to the combined effect of project impacts with the impacts of other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future projects. Both CEQA and *CEQA Guidelines* require that cumulative impacts be analyzed in an EIR. As set forth in the *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15130(b), “*the discussion of cumulative impacts shall reflect the severity of the impacts, and their likelihood of occurrence, the discussion need not be as detailed as the discussion of environmental impacts attributable to the project alone.*”

According to Section 15355 of the *CEQA Guidelines*:

“Cumulative impacts” refer to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts.

- a) The individual effects may be changes resulting from a single project or a number of separate projects.*
- b) The cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment which results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable probable future projects. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time.”*

Therefore, the cumulative discussion in this EIR focuses on whether the impacts of the proposed project are cumulatively considerable within the context of impacts caused by other past, present, or future projects. In the case of this EIR the cumulative analysis focuses on cumulative historic impacts specifically with reference to Myron Hunt-designed buildings.