

CHAPTER 3: RESPONSES TO COMMENTS

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and City of Los Angeles procedures permit the public to respond to information included in a Draft EIR in one of two ways. First, the public may prepare written comments. Second, the public may submit oral testimony during public hearings on a project. Section 15088 of the CEQA Guidelines states that the lead agency shall evaluate comments on environmental issues received from persons who reviewed the Draft EIR and shall prepare written responses. No public hearings have occurred regarding consideration of the Draft EIR and all comments on the Draft EIR have been received in writing. This Chapter 3, Responses to Comments, is consistent with procedures defined in the CEQA Guidelines.

1. City of Los Angeles, Wastewater Engineering Services Division, Bureau of Sanitation, Ali Poosti, Acting Division Manager, October 27, 2010

- 1-1 The comment indicates that the project could increase wastewater discharges by 3,405 gallons per day (gpd), as a result of increased area. School uses are somewhat different from other uses because flows are generally proportional to number of students not the area of development. The on-site population is not anticipated to increase at Occidental College as a result of the project and therefore flows would not be expected to increase.

The letter does indicate that should flows increase by the amount calculated by the Bureau of Sanitation the sewer system should be able to accommodate the project. As noted in the letter, Occidental College will require approval to connect to the sewer. Approval of connection to sewer lines as appropriate and with available capacity will be undertaken as directed by Bureau of Sanitation.

- 1-2 The project would comply with Standard Urban Stormwater Mitigation Plan regulations as required. A Wet Weather Erosion Control Plan will be prepared for construction during the rainy season.

2. The Eagle Rock Association, Robert F. Gotham, President, October 27, 2010

- 2-1 Comment noted. The commenter's views will be forwarded to the decisionmaker for consideration in taking action on the project. Occidental College has decided to move forward with the Preservation Alternative (revised slightly from what was presented in the Draft EIR). The Preservation Alternative would comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. See Chapter 4, Corrections and Additions, of this Final EIR.

3. Los Angeles Conservancy, Linda Dishman, President, November 22, 2010

3-1 Comment noted. The commenter's views will be forwarded to the decisionmaker for its consideration in taking action on the project. As required by Mitigation Measure 3A.4, the College will retain a qualified historic preservation consultant to monitor project construction to ensure compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, including retention of historic fabric as feasible in the north and south walls.

4. Highland Park Heritage Trust, Carmela Gomes, President, November 20, 2010

4-1 Comments noted. The commenter's views will be forwarded to the decisionmaker for its consideration in taking action on the project. The originally proposed project, as noted in the Draft EIR did not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. However, as noted in Chapter 1, the College has agreed to pursue the Preservation Alternative as amended in this Final EIR (see Chapter 4 below). The Preservation Alternative would meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

4-2 The project would be subject to and constructed in accordance with the State Historic Building Code (SHBC) as the City of Los Angeles as the building authority applies the SHBC to eligible resources, such as Swan Hall.

4-3 While the project is currently designated a contributing structure to an historic district, it is clearly eligible as an individual resource. The analysis of the proposed project and potential impacts on Swan Hall would not change for an individual resource. Cumulative impacts are the combined impacts of a number of projects. The Swan Hall project together with other projects that impact historic buildings, particularly those projects that impact buildings designed by Myron Hunt, would have a cumulative impact on such resources. The Preservation Alternative would not have a project specific significant impact on historic resources nor would it result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to a cumulative impact on historic resources. See the analysis on page 3A-25 of the Draft EIR that found that the project as originally proposed would not have a cumulative impact on Myron Hunt-designed buildings.

4-4 The Preservation Alternative that is now the preferred plan of the College would preserve all plaster, windows and cast stone ornamentation under the supervision of a Preservation Architect (Mitigation Measure 3A.4), as feasible, except: 1) on the north and south facades where much of the plaster and hollow clay tile has previously been substantially altered and much of the quoining is made of polystyrene as a result of past reearthquake repair efforts efforts, and 2) where the connecting structure would join to Swan Hall. For future reference, a mold of the doorway and surround on the west façade would be made prior to their removal.

4-5 All three doorways leading from the quad would be operable. For reasons of logistics and circulation, the main building entrance would be from the south side in the new structure.

- 4-6 The proposed building addition would be consistent in style and yet differentiated from the historic Swan Hall building. The center portion of the original west facade projects out approximately eighteen inches and is highlighted by plaster quoins running the full height of the facade at the corners of this element. This tripartite division accentuated by the decorative corners would be obscured by the project as originally proposed. The Preservation Alternative would add a stepped reveal (notch) at the connection of the Addition to the original building (approximately 16 inches wide by 12 inches deep running from the ground to the roof) that would highlight the tripartite division of the west facade and existing plaster quoins.
- 4-7 As noted above and in the discussion of the Preservation Alternative, the proposed building addition would be distinct from and differentiated from Swan Hall to comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Thus no significant impact to Swan Hall, or to a potential Campus Historic District, is anticipated to result from the addition and reducing the height of the addition is not necessary to comply with the Standards.
- 4-8 See Response 4-6 above.
- 4-9 See Response 4-1 above.
- 4-10 See response 4-1 above. The College is now proceeding with the Preservation Alternative as the preferred alternative.
- 4-11 The 2006 Master Plan is an internal College document and is therefore not addressed in CEQA documents. It is subject to change as circumstances and the needs of the College change. It is not subject to approval of the City or any other parties. Nonetheless, the Preservation Alternative as now proposed would be generally consistent with the 2006 Master Plan approved by the College.

5. Frank F. Parello, Principal, Preservation, Planning and Development, November 20, 2010

- 5-1 Comments noted. As noted in Chapter 1, and in the responses above the College has decided to pursue approval of the Preservation Alternative with Three Story Addition, not the project as proposed in the Draft EIR.
- 5-2 Swan Hall appears to meet criteria for individual listing on the California Register. However, whether it is individually eligible or eligible as a contributor to a district, the analysis of impacts to the resource would not change. The character-defining features would not change, the analysis and determination of significance of proposed changes to those features would not change, mitigation measures would not change, and the conclusions would not change.

5-3 Starting on page 2-9 and ending on page 2-20 the discretionary actions required for the project (including the requirement for a Conditional Use Permit) are identified. CEQA Section Guidelines Section 15124(d)(1) requires that the Project description section of an EIR include the following:

- (d) *A statement briefly describing the intended uses of the EIR.*
 - (1) *This statement shall include, to the extent that the information is known to the lead agency,*
 - (A) *A list of the agencies that are expected to use the EIR in their decision-making, and*
 - (B) *A list of permits and other approvals required to implement the project.*

A detailed explanation of the findings required for each action is not required.

5-4 Page 3-25 of the Draft EIR indicates, “[T]he loss of this one building could set a precedent for how other buildings on campus will be treated as time goes by. The loss of additional contributing buildings on campus due to removal of historic materials or demolition could have a cumulative negative impact on the campus historic district.”

As noted above, the College now intends to pursue the Preservation Alternative as the preferred alternative thus eliminating a potential impact to historic resources on the campus.

5-5 As noted in Chapter 1 and in the responses above, the College intends to pursue the Preservation Alternative, which would result in mitigation of all impacts below a level of significance. As indicated on page 3A-28 under the heading, Significant Impacts after Mitigation, the originally proposed project described in the Draft EIR would have a significant and unavoidable impact with respect to historic resources (Swan Hall). In addition, in the summary table p. ES-4, under the third column (Level of Significance After Mitigation), impacts to historic resources are indicated as “Significant.”

5-6 The Preservation Alternative, as now preferred by the College (see Chapter 1 and responses above), would meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. As noted by the commenter in Comment 5-7, a peer review of costs was undertaken by an independent, objective, cost estimator (O’Halloran).

5-7 The commenter’s view that the peer review cost estimator’s neutral, outside objectivity imply that his estimate is valid and more credible than that of the architect is noted.

5-8 Anyone who has had a cost estimate on simple home improvements or car repairs knows that cost estimates (and in fact costs) can vary considerably, for a number of reasons. The same variability in costs applies to commercial and institutional construction. The approximately \$2 million (\$1.95 million in the Draft EIR) estimate cited by the commenter includes soft costs; the \$566,000 O’Halloran estimate does not. Soft costs could add another \$450,000 to the O’Halloran estimate. As noted in Chapter 1 and the

- responses above, the College intends to pursue approval of the Preservation Alternative (despite increased costs). Cost is a factor in feasibility and is a valid reason, under CEQA, for an applicant to reject an alternative.
- 5-9 Reconstruction replicates character-defining features and may or may not be able to match the exact dimensions, materials, techniques or finishes employed decades ago during the original construction. When original historic fabric exists reconstruction, would result in loss of historic fabric and character defining features (because of this reconstruction) and therefore a significant impact on the historic resource Swan Hall.
- 5-10 The description of the Preservation Alternative in the Draft EIR incorrectly indicated that the central door on the east façade would remain operable. Under the refined Preservation Alternative presented in Chapter 4 of this Final EIR, the central door (as well as the north and south doors) in the east façade would remain operable.
- 5-11 The Preservation Alternative has been refined to address the condition of the north and south facades that was not fully understood at the time the draft EIR was prepared. As a result of past earthquake damage, the north and south facades, which had been substantially damaged, were reconstructed with replacement quoins on the corners made of polystyrene blocks. The reconstructed north and south facades have lost much of the original materials and finishes. The refined Preservation Alternative (see Chapter 4 of this Final EIR) contemplates reconstruction of the north and south facades. This reconstruction would take place under the oversight of an experienced preservation architect (as required by mitigation measure 3A.4) and original historic fabric would be retained as feasible.
- 5-12 See Response 5-11 above. The reconstructed north and south walls would be again reconstructed under the now preferred alternative; as they have already been reconstructed much of the facades' historic fabric was previously removed due to its earthquake-damaged condition.
- 5-13 Shotcrete is material that is placed on the interior side of walls to help with building strengthening; the plaster is the exterior coating of the building. Shotcrete and plaster preservation are not incompatible. The refined Preservation Alternative may include shotcrete to strengthen walls from the interior side. To the extent feasible, existing plaster would be retained in place. As per Mitigation Measure 3A.4, a Preservation Architect would monitor testing and construction methods to ensure compliance with the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation.
- 5-14 See Response 4-7.
- 5-15 See Response 5-3. The commenter identifies one of the findings that must be made for the Conditional Use Permit to be approved. The commenter does not identify a potentially significant impact that should be addressed in an EIR. The project is continuation of an existing use and would not result in any land use impacts.

- 5-16 The proposed project is intended to provide new offices and meeting rooms for existing faculty (who have been housed in undersized, handicap inaccessible space for a number of years). The project would not lead to an increase in students or faculty, and therefore would not lead to an increase in demand for parking. The campus currently has more spaces than required by the City: the City requires 1,451 spaces for current uses on the campus (this is more than the demand identified in the 2008 Occidental College Specific Plan Draft EIR, based on survey data, of 1,402 spaces for a student population of 2,000). There are currently 1,576 spaces located throughout the campus, 125 more than required by the City. Code would require one space per 500 square feet of institutional use for the 22,700 square feet of additional space in the addition, or 45 spaces, which could be more than accommodated in the existing excess available parking on-campus. (Temporary relocation of faculty offices to trailers results in the temporary loss of 71 spaces.)
- 5-17 See Response 5-16. CEQA documents address the potential for projects to create new environmental impacts. As noted in response 5-16, the project would not result in additional students or faculty on campus.
- 5-18 The water table at the project site is approximately 40 feet below grade in the vicinity of Swan Hall. However, that is not the reason that the project cannot be lowered in to the hill, rather the reasons that the project floor elevations are as proposed are as follows:
- The existing Swan Hall lower first floor and the proposed first floor of the addition are commonly tied together; in addition all other floors are tied at the west face.
 - The first floor and basement floor planes must be set within reasonable elevations to allow for ease of ADA access. Because of the spread of the building and considerable change in grade across the site, there is a balance as to where the first floor level is set in order to be able to access the basement level from the exterior, without requiring additional elevators.
 - If the basement level were set any lower than its current proposed elevation, it would become a legal floor according to Code with additional requirements for the building shafts and fire safety. In addition, providing natural lighting (in accordance with LEED requirements and to provide usable offices and meeting rooms) below grade would require opening up more and larger light wells around the building, which would create a larger building footprint.

The proposed project would incrementally increase impervious surfaces on campus. The new structure would include drainage facilities and on-site underground stormwater capture and ground infiltration. The project is designed to ensure that the project does not result in any new drainage concerns on campus or in the vicinity.

5-19 Comment noted. As noted in Chapter 1, the College now intends to pursue approval of the Preservation Alternative, which would be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, and the commenter's advice.

5-20 See Response 4-11.

5-21 Comment noted. The commenter views will be forwarded to the decisionmaker as part of the action on the project. As noted in Chapter 1 and the responses above, the College now intends to pursue the Preservation Alternative consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the commenter's wishes.

6. Chris Smith, President, Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council, November 15, 2010

6-1 Comments noted. The commenter notes the points that lead to the Draft EIR finding that the project as proposed would result in a significant adverse impact on historic resources (Swan Hall). The College has now decided to move forward with the Preservation Alternative as amended in Chapter 4 of this Final EIR. The Preservation Alternative would meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and would not have a significant adverse impact on historic resources.

6-2 The mitigation measures identified in the EIR (including the requirement for an experienced Preservation Architect to monitor all work as required by Measure 3A.4) will be required conditions of approval for the project. Compliance with these measures will be monitored in accordance with the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan presented in Chapter 5 of this Final EIR.

6-3 The College intends to proceed with a modified version of Alternative 2, Preservation Alternative with Three-Story addition. The three-story addition has been determined to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation because it would be sufficiently distinct from and differentiated from the historic Swan Hall. See also Response 4-7 above.

7. Scott Morgan, Director, State Clearinghouse, Governor's Office of Planning and Research, November 23, 2010

7-1 The fact that no comments were received from State agencies is noted.