

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR) to evaluate potential environmental effects that would result from development of the proposed Los Angeles State Historic Park (LASHP) Master Development Plan Phase I Implementation (proposed project). This EIR has been prepared in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA) statutes (Cal. Pub. Res. Code, Section 21000 et. seq., as amended) and its implementing guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., Title 14, Section 15000 et. seq., 2010). CDPR is identified as the lead agency for the proposed project under CEQA. This Final EIR contains comments and responses to comments received on the Draft EIR, which was circulated for public review from January 27, 2012 to March 14, 2012. The comments and responses to comments are presented in Chapter 7, Response to Comments on the Draft EIR. Revisions and clarifications to the Final EIR made in response to comments and information received on the Draft EIR are listed in Chapter 6, Clarifications and Modifications.

1.1 SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The LASHP, historically Southern Pacific Railroad's River Station, but most recently known as the Cornfield or Chinatown Yard property, is a site of social, historical, and cultural importance, and one of the last large open spaces in downtown Los Angeles. The project site is owned and operated by CDPR, which acquired the project site in December 2001 and operates it as part of the Angeles District of the CDPR parks system. In 1971, 30 years prior to CDPR purchase of the project site, the City of Los Angeles recognized the local significance of the site and dedicated it as Historic-Cultural Monument No. 82 for its role as the Southern Pacific Railroad Company's River Station railroad yard. Surrounded by several diverse downtown neighborhoods, the proposed long-term development design would express many of the interwoven histories and the multi-cultural significance of the project site, while satisfying a broad range of year-round recreational activities. Additional information regarding the background and history of the project site is provided in Chapter 2, Project Description, of this EIR.

The 32-acre LASHP project site is located at 1245 North Spring Street in the eastern portion of the City of Los Angeles, approximately 1.5 miles north of the downtown Los Angeles financial district and directly east of the Chinatown district. The project site is generally bound by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) Gold Line right-of-way and Broadway Street to the north, the channelized Los Angeles River to the east, Spring Street and commercial/industrial uses to the south, and the Metro Gold Line right-of-way and commercial/industrial uses to the west. Several historic and ethnically diverse communities surround the project site include Lincoln Heights, Solano Canyon, Chinatown, Chavez Ravine, and the William Mead Homes public housing complex. Major landmarks in the project vicinity include Elysian Park and Dodger Stadium, located approximately 0.25 miles north of the project site.

The proposed project represents the design footprint of the long-term vision of LASHP. The LASHP Development Plan would be implemented in at least three phases. This EIR analyzes the potential impacts primarily related to the implementation of Phase I of the LASHP Master Development Plan,

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which would entail construction and operation of a 32-acre park including various event spaces, observation and interpretive areas, recreation areas and pathways, parking, constructed wetlands and natural habitat area, as well as park furnishings and infrastructure.

1.2 THE CEQA ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS

CEQA requires preparation of an EIR when there is substantial evidence supporting a fair argument that a proposed project may have a significant effect on the environment. The purpose of an EIR is to provide decision makers, public agencies, and the general public with an objective and informational document that fully discloses the environmental effects of the proposed project. The EIR process is intended to facilitate the objective evaluation of potentially significant direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the proposed project, and to identify feasible mitigation measures and alternatives that would reduce or avoid the proposed project's significant effects. In addition, CEQA specifically requires that an EIR identify those adverse impacts determined to be significant after mitigation.

In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines, an Initial Study was prepared and a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was distributed on November, 18 2008 to approximately 200 public agencies, interested organizations, and members of the general public. The purpose of the NOP was to provide notification that the CDPR planned to prepare an EIR and to solicit input on the scope and content of the EIR. Seven written comment letters were received from various agencies, organizations, and individuals. These comments and the NOP are included in Appendix A of this EIR.

A scoping meeting was held near the project site at the Los Angeles Conservation Corps Clean & Green Headquarters on November 20, 2008. The purpose of this meeting was to seek input from public agencies and the general public regarding the environmental issues and concerns that may potentially result from the proposed project to be addressed in the EIR. Approximately 60 people attended the public information meeting. The following list summarizes the public comments and questions that were received at the public information meeting related to environmental issues:

- **Cultural Resources.** Create more of a historic design and feel to match the previous use of the site as a railroad yard. Ensure that the history of the area is integrated and interpreted as part of the design of the park. (see Chapter 3.4, Cultural and Paleontological Resources)
- **Traffic and Transportation.** Concern with increase in traffic to nearby streets if Spring St. were to be declassified to a lower capacity. The park should be accessible for large equipment trucks for large events. Ensure that there is sufficient intermodal accessibility to the park. (see Chapter 3.12, Transportation and Traffic)

This EIR focuses on the environmental impacts identified as potentially significant or requiring further study during the Initial Study process, including the comments received in response to the NOP. The issue areas analyzed in detail in this EIR include aesthetics; air quality; biological resources; cultural and paleontological resources; geology and soils; greenhouse gas emissions; hazards and hazardous materials; hydrology and water quality; noise; population and housing; public services and utilities; and

transportation and traffic. Effects found to be less than significant are addressed in subsection 4.2 of Chapter 4, Impact Overview, of this EIR.

The Draft EIR was circulated from January 27, 2012 through March 14, 2012. The purpose of the public review period was to provide interested public agencies, organizations, and individuals the opportunity to comment on the contents and accuracy of the document. The Draft EIR and the Notice of Completion was distributed to the California Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse. A Notice of Availability (NOA) was distributed to approximately 491 agencies and community stakeholders, and 48 relevant legislators. The NOA informed them of where the Draft EIR could be reviewed and how to comment. Copies of the Draft EIR were made available to the public for review at 10 local libraries, as well as two CDPR offices. A copy of the document was also posted online. The public was given the opportunity to provide verbal comment on the document at the Draft EIR public hearing on February 16, 2012. This Final EIR contains comments and responses to comments received on the Draft EIR. The comments and responses to comments are presented in Chapter 7, Response to Comments on the Draft EIR. Revisions and clarifications made in response to comments and information received on the Draft EIR are listed in Chapter 6, Clarifications and Modifications.

General questions about this EIR or the EIR process should also be submitted to the lead agency at the address above. CDPR will prepare written responses to all comments pertaining to environmental issues raised in the Draft EIR review if they are submitted in writing and postmarked by the last day of the public review period identified in the Notice of Availability. Mailed, faxed, or e-mailed comments will be accepted.

Prior to approval of the proposed project, CDPR, as the lead agency and decision-making entity, is required to certify that this EIR has been completed in accordance with CEQA, that the proposed project has been reviewed and the information in this EIR has been considered, and that this EIR reflects the independent judgment of CDPR. CEQA also requires CDPR to adopt “findings” with respect to each significant environmental effect identified in the EIR (Pub. Res. Code Section 21081; Cal. Code Regs, Title 14, Section 15091). For each significant effect, CEQA requires the approving agency to make one or more of the following findings:

- Alterations have been made to avoid or substantially lessen significant impacts identified in the Final EIR.
- The responsibility to carry out such changes or alterations is under the jurisdiction of another agency.
- Specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, which make infeasible the mitigation measures or alternatives identified in the Final EIR.

If CDPR concludes that the proposed project would result in significant effects that cannot be substantially lessened or avoided by feasible mitigation measures and alternatives, CDPR must adopt a “Statement of Overriding Considerations” prior to approval of the proposed project (Pub. Res. Code

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Section 21081[b]). Such statements are intended under CEQA to provide a written means by which the lead agency balances the benefits of the proposed project and the significant and unavoidable environmental impacts. Where the lead agency concludes that the economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits outweigh the unavoidable environmental impacts, the lead agency may find such impacts “acceptable” and approve the proposed project.

In addition, public agencies, when approving a project, must also adopt a Mitigation Monitoring or Reporting Program describing the changes that were incorporated into the proposed project or made a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment (Pub. Res. Code Section 21081.6). The Mitigation Monitoring or Reporting Program is adopted at the time of project approval and is designed to ensure compliance during project implementation. Upon approval of the proposed project, CDPH will be responsible for implementation of the proposed project’s Mitigation Monitoring or Reporting Program.

1.3 ORGANIZATION OF THE EIR

This EIR is organized as follows:

The **Executive Summary** provides an overview of the information provided in detail in subsequent chapters. It consists of an introduction; a brief description of the proposed project and alternatives considered; a discussion of issues raised by the public and agencies relative to project construction and operations; and a table that summarizes the potential environmental impacts in each category, the significance determination for those impacts, mitigation measures, and significance after mitigation.

Chapter 1 (Introduction) provides a summary of the proposed project, an overview of the CEQA environmental review process, and a description of the organization of the EIR.

Chapter 2 (Project Description) provides a description of the proposed project. Project objectives are identified and information on the proposed project characteristics and construction scenario is provided. This chapter also includes a description of the intended uses of the EIR and public agency actions related to the proposed project.

Chapter 3 (Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation) describes the potential environmental effects of implementing the proposed project. The discussion in Chapter 3 is organized into 12 environmental issue areas as follows:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Paleontological Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Utilities
- Transportation and Traffic

For each environmental issue, the analysis and discussion are organized into five subsections as described below:

Environmental Setting – This subsection describes, from a local and regional perspective, the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the proposed project and at the project site at the time of publication of the NOP. The environmental setting establishes the baseline conditions which were used to determine whether specific project-related impacts would be significant.

Regulatory Setting – This subsection describes any federal, state and/or local regulations that are applicable to the proposed project.

Thresholds of Significance – This subsection identifies a set of thresholds according to which the level of impact is determined.

Environmental Impacts – This subsection provides information on the environmental effects of the proposed project and whether the impacts of the proposed project would meet or exceed the established significance criteria.

Mitigation Measures – This subsection identifies feasible mitigation measures that would avoid or substantially reduce significant adverse project-related impacts.

Level of Significance after Mitigation – This subsection indicates whether project-related impacts would be reduced to below a level of significance with implementation of the mitigation measures identified in the EIR. This subsection also identifies any residual significant and unavoidable adverse effects of the proposed project that would result even after the mitigation measures have been implemented.

Chapter 4 (Impact Overview) presents the other mandatory CEQA discussions, including the following:

Unavoidable Significant Adverse Impacts – This subsection identifies and summarizes the unavoidable significant impacts described in detail in Chapter 3.

Effects Not Found to be Significant – This subsection identifies and summarizes the issue areas that were determined to have no adverse environmental effect or a less than significant environmental effect given the established significance criteria.

Cumulative Impacts – This subsection addresses the potentially significant cumulative impacts that may result from the proposed project when taking into account other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects.

Irreversible Environmental Changes – This subsection addresses the extent to which the proposed project would result in the commitment of nonrenewable resources.

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Growth-Inducing Impacts – This subsection describes the potential of the proposed project to induce economic or population growth or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment.

Chapter 5 (Alternatives) describes and evaluates the comparative merits of a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project that would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the proposed project and avoid or substantially lessen potentially significant project-related impacts. This chapter also describes the analysis and rationale for selecting the range of alternatives discussed in the EIR and identifies the alternatives considered by CDPR that were rejected from further discussion during the environmental analysis process. Additionally, Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the environmental effects of the No Project Alternative and identifies the environmentally superior alternative.

Chapter 6 (Acronyms and Abbreviations) presents an alphabetical list of all acronyms and abbreviations used in this EIR.

Chapter 7 (List of Preparers) identifies those persons responsible for the preparation of this EIR.

Chapter 8 (References) provides a bibliography of reference materials used in preparation of this EIR.