

Section 1.0

Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This introduction is intended to provide the reader with general information regarding (1) overview of the proposed project and site, (2) the purpose of an environmental impact report (EIR), (3) standards for EIR adequacy, (4) an introduction to the environmental review process, (5) the format and content of this EIR, and (6) the EIR availability and processing.

1.2 Project Overview

The proposed project consists of the construction and operation of a 144-room extended stay hotel at 233 North Fair Oaks Avenue in Pasadena.

The proposed project site has been developed in various capacities since the 1880s. Former uses of the site included a bank, residential uses, an athletic club, plumbing retail store, photography store, machine shop, pressing/dye works, and a dry cleaner.

The project applicant (RD Olson Development) is requesting the following entitlement actions to allow the hotel:

- Conditional Use Permit to establish a “Lodging Hotel” use, as defined by the Pasadena Municipal Code, Chapter 17 (Zoning Code) within CD-1 Zoning District;
- Conditional Use Permit for a new non-residential construction exceeding 25,000 square feet of gross floor area within the CD-1 Zoning District;
- Minor Conditional Use Permit for any proposed commercial development projects with over 15,000 square feet of gross floor area. within Central District Transit-Oriented Area (or TOD); and
- Minor Conditional Use Permit for a “lodging hotel” use with kitchens in more than 60 percent of the rooms.

1.3 Purpose and Legal Authority

Subsequent to the passage of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in 1970, a process was established that would (1) inform governmental decision makers and the public of potentially significant environmental effects of proposed activities, (2) identify ways that environmental impacts can be avoided or reduced, (3) prevent significant, avoidable impacts to the environment by requiring changes in projects through the use of alternatives and/or mitigation measures when governmental agencies find changes to be feasible, and (4) disclose to the public the reasons why a governmental agency approved a project in the manner the agency chose if significant environmental effects are identified.

This EIR serves as an informational document for the public and decision makers of the City of Pasadena (the City). The EIR process will culminate with a Planning Commission hearing to consider certification of a Final EIR and consideration of the project.

1.4 EIR Adequacy

The principal use of an EIR is to provide information as one aspect of a comprehensive planning analysis. The staff reports prepared by City staff synthesize pertinent environmental and planning information for presentation to the City of Pasadena Planning Commission. Given the important role of the EIR in this planning and decision-making process, it is imperative that the information presented in the EIR be factual, adequate, and complete. The standards for adequacy of an EIR, defined in Section 15151 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, are as follows: An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision makers 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 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.

This EIR has been prepared by the City of Pasadena in accordance with the *State CEQA Guidelines* and City guidelines for the implementation of CEQA.

1.5 Lead, Responsible and Trustee Agencies

The *State CEQA Guidelines* define “lead,” “responsible” and “trustee” agencies. The City of Pasadena is the lead agency for the project because it has the initial responsibility for approving the project. A “responsible agency” refers to a public agency other than the lead agency that has discretionary approval over the project. A “trustee agency” refers to a state agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by the project. There are no responsible or trustee agencies associated with the proposed project.

1.6 Environmental Review Process

1.6.1 Process Overview

The environmental review process, as required under CEQA, is summarized below. The steps are presented in sequential order.

- **Notice of Preparation (NOP) Distributed.** Immediately after deciding that an EIR is required, the lead agency files an NOP soliciting input on the EIR scope to “responsible,” “trustee,” and involved federal agencies; to the State Clearinghouse, if one or more state agencies is a responsible or trustee agency; and to parties previously requesting notice in writing. A scoping meeting to solicit public input on the issues to be assessed in the EIR is not required, but may be conducted by the lead agency.
- **Draft EIR Prepared.** The Draft EIR must contain a (1) table of contents or index, (2) summary, (3) project description, (4) environmental setting, (5) significant impacts (direct, indirect, cumulative, growth-inducing and unavoidable impacts), (6) alternatives, (7) mitigation measures, and (8) irreversible changes.

- **Public Notice and Review.** The lead agency must prepare a Notice of Availability of an EIR. The Notice must be placed in the County Clerk's office for 30 days (Public Resources Code Section 21092.3) and sent to anyone requesting it. Additionally, public notice of Draft EIR availability must be given through at least one of the following procedures: (1) publication in a newspaper of general circulation, (2) posting on and off the project site, and (3) direct mailing to owners and occupants of contiguous properties. The lead agency must consult with and request comments on the Draft EIR from responsible and trustee agencies, and adjacent cities and counties. The minimum public review period for a Draft EIR is 30 days. When a Draft EIR is sent to the State Clearinghouse for review, the public review period must be 45 days, unless a shorter period is approved by the State Clearinghouse (Public Resources Code 21091). Distribution of the Draft EIR may be required through the State Clearinghouse.
- **Notice of Completion.** The lead agency must file a Notice of Completion with the State Clearinghouse as soon as it completes the Draft EIR.
- **Final EIR.** A Final EIR must include (1) the Draft EIR, (2) comments received during public review, (3) a list of persons and entities commenting during the public review period, and (4) responses to comments.
- **Certification of Final EIR.** The lead agency shall certify that (1) the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, (2) the Final EIR was presented to the decision-making body of the lead agency, and (3) the decision-making body reviewed and considered the information in the Final EIR prior to approving a project.
- **Lead Agency Project Decision.** The lead agency may (1) disapprove a project because of its significant environmental effects; (2) require changes to a project to reduce or avoid significant environmental effects; or (3) approve a project despite its significant environmental effects, if the proper findings and statement of overriding considerations are adopted.
- **Findings/Statement of Overriding Considerations.** For each significant impact of the project identified in the EIR, the lead or responsible agency must find, based on substantial evidence, that either (1) the project has been changed to avoid or substantially reduce the magnitude of the impact; (2) changes to the project are within another agency's jurisdiction and such changes have or should be adopted; or (3) specific economic, social, or other considerations make the mitigation measures or project alternatives infeasible. If an agency approves a project with unavoidable significant environmental effects, it must prepare a written Statement of Overriding Considerations that sets forth the specific social, economic, or other reasons supporting the agency's decision.
- **Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.** When an agency makes findings on significant environmental effects identified in the EIR, it must adopt a reporting or monitoring program for mitigation measures that were adopted or made conditions of project approval to mitigate significant effects.
- **Notice of Determination.** An agency must file a Notice of Determination after deciding to approve a project for which an EIR is prepared. A local agency must file the Notice with the County Clerk. The Notice must be posted for 30 days and sent to anyone previously requesting notice. Posting of the Notice starts a 30-day statute of limitations on CEQA challenges.

1.6.2 Notice of Preparation and Scoping

To determine which environmental topics should be addressed in this EIR, the City of Pasadena prepared and circulated an NOP from July 2, 2012 through August 11, 2012. The NOP was circulated in order to receive input from interested agencies (e.g., responsible and trustee agencies) and the public on the EIR. Per *State CEQA Guidelines*, an NOP is to be circulated for 30 days, allowing agencies and the public to provide the lead agency with specific detail about their desires for the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR. A list of the letters and comments submitted during the NOP comment period are provided in Appendix A. Also included in Appendix A is the location of where the comments received on the NOP are addressed in the EIR. A copy of the letters and comments received during the NOP comment period are also provided in Appendix A.

The City held a scoping meeting on July 11, 2012 to solicit comments and to inform the public of the proposed EIR. Oral comments were recorded and are summarized in Appendix A along with the location of where the comments are addressed in the EIR.

1.6.3 Topics Addressed in the EIR

This EIR addresses the issues determined to be potentially significant pursuant to the Initial Study and responses to the NOP. This EIR addresses these issues and identifies potentially significant environmental impacts of the project and cumulative development in the City in accordance with provisions set forth in the *State CEQA Guidelines*. The EIR also recommends feasible mitigation measures, where possible, that would reduce or eliminate adverse environmental effects.

The issues addressed in this EIR include:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Greenhouse Gases
- Noise
- Transportation

In addition to these technical sections, other important information is incorporated as part of this EIR. As required by CEQA, this EIR also includes a (1) description of the existing environmental and regulatory setting; (2) description of the proposed project; (3) description and analysis of alternatives that can reduce the proposed project's impact potential (included in Section 4.0, Alternatives); and (4) sections that summarize cumulative, long-term, and irreversible effects associated with the proposed project.

Documents referred to, referenced, or cited are incorporated by reference and are available for review at the City of Pasadena, Planning and Community Development Department, 175 North Garfield Avenue, Pasadena, California 91101.

1.7 Availability of the Draft EIR

The Draft EIR has been distributed to affected agencies, surrounding cities, and interested parties for a 45-day review period in accordance with Section 15087 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*. During the 45-day review period, which commences on Friday, January 4, 2013 and ends on Tuesday, February 19, 2013, the Draft EIR is available for general public review at the following location:

- City of Pasadena Planning and Community Department at 175 North Garfield Avenue

Additionally, the Draft EIR can be downloaded or reviewed via the Internet at:

- <http://www.cityofpasadena.net>.

Interested parties may provide written comments on the Draft EIR. Written comments on the Draft EIR should be received by Tuesday, February 19, 2013 and should be addressed to:

Mr. Jose Jimenez, Planner
City of Pasadena
Planning and Community Development Department
175 North Garfield Avenue
Pasadena, California 91109

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 Pasadena, as well as other public decision makers.