

## **2.0 Introduction and Purpose**





## 2.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

### 2.1 PURPOSE OF THE EIR

The Project includes a request for approval of the Lincoln Specific Plan (Project) and related entitlements. The Project proposes to establish a maximum allowable development within the Specific Plan area boundaries of 750 dwelling units and 208,350 square feet of commercial land uses. Based on the proposed Specific Plan, Project buildout assumes 750 DU, approximately 20,017 square feet of commercial uses within existing structures to be adaptively reused, 188,333 square feet of commercial uses within new structures, approximately 4.6 acres of open space, and offsite roadway and utility improvements. In addition to Lincoln Specific Plan adoption, the Project includes the following entitlements: 1) Zoning Code and Zoning Map Amendments; 2) Certificates of Appropriateness (for historic structures); 3) Tentative Tract Map Approval; 4) Development Agreement; and 5) Water Supply Assessment.<sup>1</sup> For more detailed information regarding the proposal, refer to Section 3.0, *Project Description*.

The City of Whittier (City) is the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and has determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required for the proposed Lincoln Specific Plan Project (State Clearinghouse No. 2014011069). This EIR has been prepared in conformance with CEQA (California Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.); *CEQA Guidelines* (California Code of Regulations [CCR], Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.); and the rules, regulations, and procedures for implementation of CEQA, as adopted by the City of Whittier. The principal *CEQA Guidelines* sections governing content of this document include Article 9 (*Contents of Environmental Impact Reports*) (Sections 15120 through 15132), and Section 15161 (*Project EIR*).

The purpose of this EIR is to review the existing conditions, analyze potential environmental impacts, and identify feasible mitigation measures to avoid or lessen the Project's potentially significant effects. This EIR addresses the Project's environmental effects, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15161. As referenced in CEQA Guidelines Section 15121(a), the primary purposes of this EIR are to:

- Inform decision-makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effects of a project;
- Identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects of a project; and
- Describe reasonable alternatives to a project.

The mitigation measures that are specified may be adopted as conditions of approval to minimize the significance of impacts resulting from the Project. In addition, this EIR is the primary reference document in the formulation and implementation of a mitigation monitoring program for the Project.

The City of Whittier (which has the principal responsibility of processing and approving the Project) and other public (i.e., responsible and trustee) agencies that may use this EIR in the decision-making or permit process will consider the information in this EIR, along with other information that may be presented during the CEQA process. Environmental impacts are not always mitigatable to a level considered less than significant; in those cases, impacts are considered significant unavoidable impacts. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section

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<sup>1</sup> The Project's Water Supply Assessment was approved by the Whittier City Council on July 29, 2014, and is provided as Appendix 11.15, *Water Supply Assessment*, of this EIR.



15093(b), if a public agency approves a project that has significant impacts that are not substantially mitigated (i.e., significant unavoidable impacts), the agency shall 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, per CEQA Guidelines Section 15093, a “statement of overriding considerations.”

This document analyzes the Project's environmental effects to the degree of specificity appropriate to the current proposed actions, as required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15146. The analysis considers the activities associated with the Project to determine the short- and long-term effects associated with their implementation. This EIR discusses the Project's direct and indirect impacts, as well as the cumulative impacts associated with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects.

## 2.2 COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA

### PUBLIC REVIEW OF DRAFT EIR

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15087 and 15105, this Draft EIR will be circulated for a 45-day public review period. The public will be invited to comment in writing on the information contained in this document. Persons and agencies commenting are encouraged to provide information that they believe is missing from the Draft EIR and to identify where the information can be obtained. All comment letters received before the close of the public review period will be responded to in writing, and the comment letters, together with the responses to those comments, will be included in the Final EIR.

Comment letters should be sent to:

City of Whittier  
Community Development Department  
13230 Penn Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Whittier, California 90602  
Attn: Mr. Conal McNamara, Director of Community Development  
cmcnamara@cityofwhittier.org

### FINAL EIR

The Final EIR will consist of the Draft EIR, revisions to the Draft EIR (if any), and responses to all written comments addressing concerns raised in the comments of responsible agencies, the public, and any other reviewing parties. After the Final EIR is completed, and at least ten days prior to the certification hearing, a copy of the response to comments made by public agencies on the Draft EIR will be provided to the commenting agencies.

## 2.3 NOTICE OF PREPARATION/ EARLY CONSULTATION (SCOPING)

In compliance with the *CEQA Guidelines*, the City of Whittier has provided opportunities for various agencies and the public to participate in the environmental review process. During Draft EIR preparation, efforts were made to contact various Federal, State, regional, and local government agencies and other interested parties to solicit comments on the scope of review in



this document. This included the distribution of a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to various responsible agencies, trustee agencies, and interested parties. In addition, notice of a public scoping meeting for the Project was included within the NOP. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, as amended, the City of Whittier circulated the NOP directly to public agencies (including the State Clearinghouse Office of Planning and Research), special districts, and members of the public who had requested such notice. The NOP was distributed on January 24, 2014 with the 30-day public review period concluding on February 24, 2014.

The purpose of the NOP was to formally announce the preparation of a Draft EIR for the proposed Project, and that, as the Lead Agency, the City was soliciting input regarding the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR. The NOP provided preliminary information regarding the anticipated range of impacts to be analyzed within the EIR.

The public scoping meeting was held on February 6, 2014 in the Radisson Hotel Whittier located at 7320 Greenleaf Avenue, Whittier. The public scoping meeting was held with the specific intent of affording interested individuals, groups, and public agencies a forum in which to present input directly to the Lead Agency in an effort to assist in further refining the intended scope and focus of the EIR, as described in the NOP.

The NOP and Initial Study/Environmental Checklist are provided as Appendix 11.1, *Notice of Preparation/Initial Study/Environmental Checklist*, and the NOP comment letters are provided as Appendix 11.2, *NOP Comment Letters*. The following summarizes the primary environmental issues raised in the NOP comment letters and identifies the EIR section where they are addressed:

- Aesthetic impacts and alterations to existing visual character in the Project area (refer to Section 5.1, *Aesthetics, Light and Glare*);
- Impacts to existing trees on the Project site (refer to Section 5.1, *Aesthetics, Light & Glare*, and Section 5.3, *Biological Resources*);
- Impacts related to air quality and greenhouse gas emissions (refer to Section 5.2, *Air Quality*, and Section 5.6, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*);
- Impacts to potential sensitive biological resources on-site (refer to Section 5.3, *Biological Resources*);
- Impacts to historic resources and alternatives to minimize impacts to historic structures on-site (refer to Section 5.4, *Cultural Resources*);
- Impacts to archaeological and paleontological resources (refer to Section 5.4, *Cultural Resources*);
- Impacts to Native American resources (refer to Section 5.4, *Cultural Resources*);
- Impacts related to hazardous materials in the Project site vicinity (refer to Section 5.7, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*);
- Consistency with regional planning documentation, goals, and policies (refer to Section 5.9, *Land Use and Planning*);



- Noise created by the proposed Project in the vicinity of the site (refer to Section 5.11, *Noise*);
- Adequacy of existing and proposed park facilities within the City to accommodate the Project (refer to Section 5.12, *Public Services and Recreation*);
- Fire protection and minimizing hazards to human health (refer to Section 5.12, *Public Services and Recreation*);
- Generation of wastewater from the Project and requirements for conveyance and treatment (refer to Section 5.13, *Utilities and Service Systems*);
- Adequacy of water supply to support the Project and local community (refer to Section 5.13, *Utilities and Service Systems*);
- Potential impacts related to solid waste and disposal capacity (refer to Section 5.13, *Utilities and Service Systems*);
- Traffic and access impacts to local and regional roadway facilities (refer to Section 5.14, *Transportation and Traffic*); and
- Traffic safety and potential traffic hazards (refer to Section 5.14, *Transportation and Traffic*).

## 2.4 FORMAT OF THE EIR

The Draft EIR is organized into 11 sections, as follows:

- Section 1.0, *Executive Summary*, provides summaries of the Project description, environmental impacts, and mitigation measures.
- Section 2.0, *Introduction and Purpose*, provides CEQA compliance information.
- Section 3.0, *Project Description*, provides a detailed Project description indicating Project location and setting, background and history; Project characteristics, objectives, phasing, and associated discretionary actions required.
- Section 4.0, *Basis for the Cumulative Analysis*, describes the approach and methodology for the cumulative analysis.
- Section 5.0, *Environmental Analysis*, contains a detailed environmental analysis of the existing conditions, potential Project impacts, recommended mitigation measures, and possible unavoidable adverse impacts for the following environmental topic areas:
  - Aesthetics, Light and Glare;
  - Air Quality
  - Biological Resources;
  - Cultural Resources;
  - Geology and Soils;
  - Greenhouse Gas Emissions;
  - Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
  - Hydrology and Water Quality;
  - Land Use and Planning;
  - Fiscal;
  - Noise;
  - Public Services and Recreation;
  - Utilities and Service Systems; and
  - Transportation and Traffic.



- Section 6.0, *Other CEQA Considerations*, discusses the long-term implications of the proposed action. Irreversible environmental changes that would be involved in the proposed action, should it be implemented, are considered. The Project's growth-inducing impacts, including the potential for population growth, and energy conservation impacts are also discussed.
- Section 7.0, *Alternatives to the Proposed Action*, describes a reasonable range of alternatives to the Project or its location that could avoid or substantially lessen the Project's significant impacts and still feasibly attain the Project's basic objectives.
- Section 8.0, *Effects Found Not to be Significant*, provides an explanation of potential impacts that have been determined not to be significant.
- Section 9.0, *Organizations and Persons Consulted*, identifies all Federal, State, and local agencies, other organizations, and individuals consulted.
- Section 10.0, *References and Sources Cited*, identifies all references and sources utilized during document preparation.
- Section 11.0, *Appendices*, contains the Project's technical documentation.

## 2.5 RESPONSIBLE AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

Certain projects or actions undertaken by a Lead Agency require subsequent oversight, approvals, or permits from other public agencies in order to be implemented. Such other agencies are referred to as Responsible Agencies and Trustee Agencies. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15381 and 15386, as amended, Responsible Agencies and Trustee Agencies are respectively defined as follows:

*"Responsible Agency" means a public agency, which proposes to carry out or approve a project, for which [a] Lead Agency is preparing or has prepared an EIR or Negative Declaration. For the purposes of CEQA, the term "responsible agency" includes all public agencies other than the Lead Agency, which have discretionary approval power over the project. (Section 15381)*

*"Trustee Agency" means a state agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by a project, which are held in trust for the people of the State of California. Trustee Agencies include; The California Department of Fish and Wildlife, The State Lands Commission; The State Department of Parks and Recreation and The University of California with regard to sites within the Natural Land and Water Reserves System. (Section 15386)*

Responsible and Trustee Agencies and other entities that may use this EIR in their decision-making process or for informational purposes include the following, among others:

- California Department of Transportation;
- California Department of Toxic Substances Control;
- Los Angeles County Sanitation District;
- Los Angeles County Fire Department;
- Los Angeles County Flood Control District;
- Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board;



- South Coast Air Quality Management District; and
- State Water Resources Control Board.

## 2.6 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

Pertinent documents relating to this EIR have been cited in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15150, which encourages incorporation by reference as a means of reducing redundancy and the length of environmental reports. The following documents are hereby incorporated by reference into this EIR. Information contained within these documents has been utilized for each section of this EIR. Copies of these documents are available for review or purchase at the City of Whittier Community Development Department (13230 Penn Street, 2nd Floor, Whittier) and on the City's web site (<http://www.cityofwhittier.org>).

*City of Whittier General Plan.* The City adopted the comprehensive City of Whittier General Plan (General Plan) in 1993. The General Plan is designed to direct growth and maintain the quality of the environment in the City. The General Plan provides planning direction for City operations and programs and serves as a guide for public and private decision-making through goals and policies that embody the intent of all City actions. The General Plan addresses a broad range of issues relating to the community's physical, economic, and social development, public safety and cultural and historical preservation. It contains an evaluation of existing conditions and provides the long-term Goals, Policies, and Standards necessary to guide growth and development in the direction that the community desires. Through the Goals, Policies, and Standards it contains, the General Plan serves as a decision-making tool to guide future development and change. The General Plan requirements for the open space and conservation elements have been combined into the Environmental Resource Management Element. The General Plan consists of a Land Use Map, and the following eight elements:

- Land Use Element;
- Housing Element (updated 2013);
- Transportation Element;
- Environmental Resource Management Element;
- Air Quality Element;
- Public Safety Element;
- Noise Element; and
- Historical Resources Element.

The General Plan was used throughout this EIR as a source of baseline data.

*Whittier Municipal Code.* The Whittier Municipal Code ("WMC") regulates municipal affairs within the City's jurisdiction including, without limitation, zoning regulations (codified in WMC Title 18). WMC Title 18 is the primary tool for implementing the Whittier General Plan's Goals, Policies, and Standards. The WMC is referenced throughout this EIR in order to establish the Project's baseline requirements according to the City's regulatory framework.

*Whittier Boulevard Specific Plan (Adopted July 11, 2005 – Amendment August 9, 2011).* The Whittier Boulevard Specific Plan (WBSP) is intended as both a strategy for change along Whittier Boulevard, and as a regulatory policy to guide and govern future development on Whittier Boulevard. The WBSP applies to all properties fronting Whittier Boulevard, from Broadway Avenue to Valley Home Road. The WBSP, which represents the zoning for properties within the WBSP boundaries, details the proposed land uses and their distribution, proposed infrastructure improvements, development standards, and implementation measures required to achieve its goals. The WBSP was used throughout this EIR as a source of descriptive data for the proposed Project.



Whittier Commercial Corridor Redevelopment Plan Amendment EIR (June 2005). The Whittier Commercial Corridor Redevelopment Plan Amendment Final EIR (FEIR) analyzed the potential environmental impacts that would result from implementation of the Whittier Commercial Corridor Redevelopment Plan Amendment. The environmental impact analysis contained in the FEIR assumes three subareas, a total of approximately 218 additional acres of real property to the existing Redevelopment Project Area. The Project site is Subarea B, the Fred C. Nelles Youth Correctional Facility. Although the Redevelopment Plan is no longer applicable to the Project as a result of the California Legislature's approval of Assembly Bill 26 (which dissolved Redevelopment Agencies), the FEIR was used throughout this document as a source of descriptive data for the proposed Project.



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