

Notice of Determination

Appendix D

To:

Office of Planning and Research
U.S. Mail: P.O. Box 3044 Sacramento, CA 95812-3044
Street Address: 1400 Tenth St., Rm 113 Sacramento, CA 95814

County Clerk
County of:
Address:

From:

Public Agency: County of L.A. Dept. of Parks & Rec.
Address: 1000 S. Fremont Avenue Unit #40 Bldg A-9 West 3rd Fl., Alhambra, CA 91803
Contact: Mr. Clement Lau
Phone: (626) 588-5301

Lead Agency (if different from above):
Address:
Contact:
Phone:

SUBJECT: Filing of Notice of Determination in compliance with Section 21108 or 21152 of the Public Resources Code.

State Clearinghouse Number (if submitted to State Clearinghouse): 2020019072

Project Title: Descanso Gardens Master Plan

Project Applicant: Descanso Gardens Guild, Inc.

Project Location (include county): 1418 Descanso Dr., La Cañada Flintridge, L.A. County, CA 91011

Project Description:

The County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation proposes to adopt a comprehensive 15-year Master Plan to guide the development of Descanso Gardens between 2020 and 2035. Descanso Gardens is one of the four botanic gardens/arboreta of Los Angeles County's park system. See Attachment for full details.

This is to advise that the County of Los Angeles has approved the above (Lead Agency or Responsible Agency)

described project on 10/13/2020 and has made the following determinations regarding the above described project.

- 1. The project will not have a significant effect on the environment.
2. An Environmental Impact Report was prepared for this project pursuant to the provisions of CEQA. A Negative Declaration was prepared for this project pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.
3. Mitigation measures were made a condition of the approval of the project.
4. A mitigation reporting or monitoring plan was adopted for this project.
5. A statement of Overriding Considerations was adopted for this project.
6. Findings were made pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.

This is to certify that the final EIR with comments and responses and record of project approval, or the negative Declaration, is available to the General Public at:

County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation 1000 S. Fremont Ave., Bldg A-9 West, 3rd Floor, Alhambra, CA 91803

Signature (Public Agency): [Signature] Title: Departmental Facilities Planner

Date: 10/13/2020 Date Received for filing at OPR:

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

Authority cited: Sections 21083, Public Resources Code. Reference Section 21000-21174, Public Resources Code.

OCT 14 2020 STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

Revised 2011

ATTACHMENT

Project Description

The County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation proposes to adopt a comprehensive 15-year Master Plan (proposed project) to guide the development of Descanso Gardens (Master Plan Area) between 2020 and 2035. Descanso Gardens is one of the four botanic gardens/arboreta of Los Angeles County's park system. The Master Plan Area is an approximately 149-acre property located in the City of La Cañada Flintridge adjacent to the eastern City of Glendale boundary, within the Fifth Supervisorial District of Los Angeles County, approximately 11 miles north of the Los Angeles Civic Center. The Master Plan Area is located in the San Rafael and La Cañada Land Grants of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute Pasadena topographic quadrangle in Township 1 North, Range 13 West, Section 2; and Township 2 North, Range 13 West, Section 35 (Figure 1, *Topographic Map with USGS 7.5-Minute Quadrangle Index*).

The Master Plan would act as a framework to guide new development within a 15-year timeframe and recommend improvements to existing gardens, seeking to provide implementable projects that would sustain operations. The Master Plan would include recommendations for improving the quality of Descanso Gardens, a County special use park facility, in the West San Gabriel Valley Planning Area, the Fifth Supervisorial District, and Los Angeles County. There are four overarching master plan strategies and tactics for the proposed Master Plan:

1. **A New Circulation Framework** to improve wayfinding, create gateway moments at garden thresholds, and increase accessibility. The proposed project would restructure the hierarchy of existing paths and provide additional paths to help improve visitor orientation and better showcase garden stories and experiences, guide visitors through the gardens instead of around the gardens, separate the visitor experience from maintenance routes, organize site amenities, and strategically distribute utilities (power and water). The circulation framework improvements would focus on five primary circulation routes: a 0.2-mile arrival procession, a 0.8-mile Gardens Loop, a 0.7-mile Woodland Walk, a 0.6-mile Nature Walk with an additional 0.5-mile Wilds Loop extension and a 0.2-mile Elevated Canopy Walk, and a 1.7-mile Service Route. The paved Service Route would be a minimum 20-foot width in order to provide adequate fire/emergency access. Approximately 85 percent of the existing path network at Descanso Gardens would remain as-is or be resurfaced for ADA accessibility. Approximately 15 percent of the circulation network would involve development of new paths.
2. **Activating the Gardens** with new and improved gardens and facilities to create new experiences and lasting activation of the gardens. The proposed project would include the development of two new gardens (Marsh Garden and Nature Discovery Garden), a new nursery and storage yard, one new temporary overflow parking area, major improvements to 11 existing gardens, and improvements to the entrance complex and the two existing parking lots. The Rose Garden would be redesigned by consolidating the flower beds for maintenance and "WOW factor." The 2,470 camellias in excellent, good, or fair conditions would be consolidated from a 9-acre area to a 3-acre area in development of the Camellia Strolling Gardens. This consolidated camellia collection garden would reorganize the layout to facilitate maintenance and ensure maximum visibility. Furthermore, existing camellias that are too close to oak root zones would be transplanted, and the oak understory would be

restored where camellias have been removed. Additional lighting would be provided to support evening events in the Japanese Garden. The area of the Ancient Forest collection would be expanded, with new specimens to bolster the collection and new pathways to meander through the garden. An improved boardwalk circulation would be installed around and across the Lake, and an observation deck would be installed from Boddy Lodge. An immersive walk among the oak canopy in the existing Camellia Forest – East would provide ADA access to the Boddy House. The native plant collection in the California Native Gardens would be expanded.

The Main Parking Lot would be redesigned and expanded to provide a new arrival garden between the reconfigured rows of parking stalls. The layout of the existing Auxiliary Parking Lot would be reconfigured to provide drop-off and parking for group arrivals and private events, including a widened entry road and bridge crossing at the Southern California Edison (SCE) utility corridor (to accommodate large trucks and buses) and an expansion of the striped parking spaces. The proposed project would increase the existing number of available parking stalls by 32 percent (184 stalls) from 574 existing parking stalls to 758 proposed parking stalls to accommodate projected visitor use. Additionally, the SCE utility corridor would be graded to provide temporary overflow parking for up to 70 vehicles during events to reduce potential overflow parking in the surrounding neighborhood. The increased number of parking spaces would bolster Descanso Gardens' capacity to meet existing parking needs and reduce the occurrence of street parking by existing visitors during peak periods (events).

3. **Weaving Water and Ecology** to intersect the site's water and ecology with the gardens and circulation in celebratory, educational, and performative ways. The proposed Master Plan would include stormwater capture and treatment improvements to enhance the ecological performance of main water features and optimize the Lake for stormwater capture for nonpotable use. In addition, Low Impact Development (LID) best management practices would be installed per the County's LID ordinance. These features include harvesting stormwater from Winery Creek Channel for treatment in the Marsh Garden, installed wetlands around the Lake edge, a bioswale in the picnic grove, and recirculation of water using pumps from the Marsh Garden to the Lake in the winter.

Exclusion fencing around the perimeter of the ticketed entry area would be improved and upgraded to protect the developed garden and removed to allow for a wildlife corridor in the undeveloped portions of the property. The Master Plan proposes improvements to existing fencing including shoring up the existing perimeter fence along the southern and southwestern edges of the ticketed entry portion of the Master Plan Area to improve deer exclusion functionality, replacing existing fencing along the northern and eastern edges of the ticketed entry portion of the Master Plan Area with a decorative garden security fence, and removing the existing fencing northwest of the ticketed entry area to allow for increased wildlife movement in the San Rafael Hills. The existing security fence between the Arrival Grassland Garden (Main Parking Lot) and Entry Garden (Descanso Drive streetscape) would remain.

4. **Organizing Operations** with new buildings, structures, and infrastructure to create new efficiencies in garden operations and vehicular circulation. A new approximately 10,500-square-foot administrative center would replace five existing administrative

office trailers, supported by staff parking, electric vehicle charging stations, a new approximately 1,500-square-foot multipurpose meeting room, and an operations staging area. The existing Rose Pavilion and cottage in the Rose Garden would be replaced with a new approximately 9,200-square-foot Meeting Pavilion and Event Terrace near the western edge of the garden, and the lawn would be consolidated into a centrally located Gathering Lawn that would accommodate large programs with better access and infrastructure than the existing Main Lawn.

Critical infrastructure upgrades would support existing programs (such as Enchanted: Forest of Light) and new programs at Descanso Gardens without requiring major temporary equipment rentals. The Master Plan proposes installation of new infrastructure (lighting, electricity, and Wi-Fi) to provide maximum flexibility for Descanso Gardens to curate new programs and installations, including permanent power hookups to support existing and future programming without temporary generators, on-site energy production to expand Descanso Gardens' use of renewable energy sources, new lighting along pathways and in event areas to support and enable nighttime programming, and consideration of flexible lighting design for installations (such as Enchanted) and programmable lighting elements that can be used by lighting designers to create special effects.

To refine programs and events at Descanso Gardens, the proposed project would involve upgrades to event centers, the Boddy Lodge & Lake Terrace, the Boddy House & Sturt Haaga Gallery, and Van de Kamp Hall. Event spaces would be repositioned along the perimeter of the gardens to improve service access for set-up and take-down and minimize interruption to the general visitors' experience. To refine operations activities at Descanso Gardens, the proposed project would involve upgrades to the existing Visitor Center, five-trailer Administrative Headquarters complex, Nursery & Maintenance Areas, and parking in the Master Plan Area. Several new restrooms would be installed in the developed portions of the gardens, including staff restrooms at the Administrative Headquarters and Boddy House, and public restrooms at Nature Discovery Zone, Rose Garden, and Minka. All new buildings and structures would be one story tall.

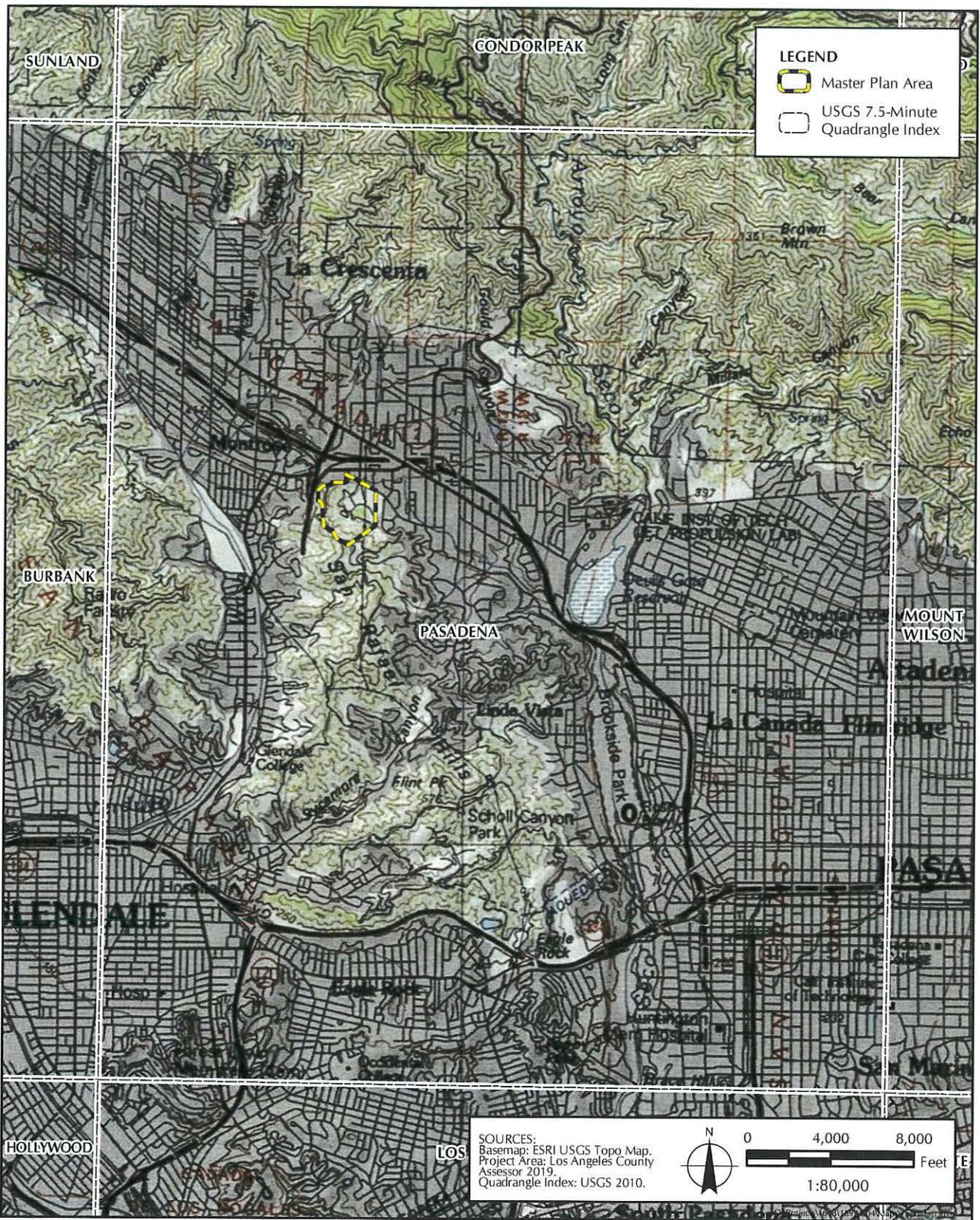


FIGURE 1
 Topographic Map with USGS 7.5-Minute Quadrangle Index