

III. Environmental Setting

1. Overview of Environmental Setting

CEQA Guidelines Section 15125 requires that an EIR include a description of the existing physical environment. This chapter provides a general overview of the existing regional and local setting in which the Project Site is located and a brief description of the existing conditions at the Project Site. Detailed information on existing conditions for each environmental topic is provided in Chapter IV, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, of this Draft EIR. This chapter also provides an overview of other potential reasonably foreseeable projects (i.e., related projects) in the vicinity of the Project Site that the City of Los Angeles (City) has determined could potentially result in cumulative impacts and are considered as part of the cumulative impacts analysis.

a) On-Site Conditions

The Project Site is located within the Sherman Oaks–Studio City–Toluca Lake–Cahuenga Pass Community Plan Area of the City. The Project Site is located just to the north of the Los Angeles River and is generally bounded by Bellaire Avenue to the west, Valley Spring Lane to the north, the Los Angeles River and Valleyheart Drive to the south, Whitsett Avenue to the east, and LAFD Station 78 to the southeast. The area proposed for the Project consists of a 16.1-acre (701,428-square-foot) parcel, owned by the School (Property) and located at 4141 Whitsett Avenue, and a 1.1-acre (47,916-square-foot) parcel the School leases from Los Angeles County (Leased Property) (portions of Assessor Parcel Number [APN] 2375-018-903), which collectively comprise the 17.2-acre (749,344-square-foot) project site (Project Site).

The Project Site is occupied by the Weddington Golf & Tennis operation. Existing on-site facilities within this area include a 2,700-square-foot clubhouse with a 10-seat café, a 799-square-foot tennis shack, and 16 tennis courts with 128 court lights that reach a height of 22 feet. A nine-hole, 27-par golf course (with Frisbee golf), comprising approximately 426,000 square feet, a 25-stall driving range with a 2,300-square-foot golf canopy, and a putting green are also located on the Project Site. The driving range features net fencing, reaching a maximum height along certain sections of approximately 100 feet. Lighting the driving range are six golf ball-shaped light standards reaching a height of approximately 32 feet. The Weddington Golf & Tennis site also includes 89 surface parking spaces.

The Tree Report, which is included as an appendix to the Biological Resources Technical Report (Appendix D of this Draft EIR), inventoried and evaluated a total of 421 trees, 258

of which are trees located on-site and 163 of which are trees located off-site.¹ As defined in the Tree Report, on-site refers to the Project Site, and off-site refers to the right-of-way surrounding the Project Site, as well as the Zev Greenway area adjacent to the Project Site. The inventoried trees are generally concentrated along the western and northern boundaries of the Project Site and along the Los Angeles River, as well as scattered throughout the golf course. Non-protected tree species vary and include cedar, olive, palm, pine, and gum trees, among others. Fan palms (174), Aleppo pine (56) and blue gum eucalyptus (42) make up more than half of all the inventoried trees. Only one significant, protected tree, a coast live oak, was inventoried off-site in the Zev Greenway; however, this tree would be preserved by the Project.

b) Surrounding Uses

The Project Site is adjacent to residential neighborhoods to the north, east, and west. These include multi-family neighborhoods along the east side of Whitsett Avenue directly east of the Project Site and along both the east and west sides of Whitsett Avenue to the north of Valley Spring Lane. Single-family residential neighborhoods are located to the north of Valley Spring Lane. LAFD Fire Station 78 is located along the west side of Whitsett Avenue, at the intersection of Whitsett Avenue and Valleyheart Drive.

To the south, the Project Site adjoins the Zev Greenway, which follows the north side of the Los Angeles River for approximately 0.5 mile between Whitsett Avenue on the east and Coldwater Canyon Avenue on the west.² The Zev Greenway is also part of the Los Angeles River Greenway, which connects various communities along the river edge. The Los Angeles River Greenway trail is a publicly-accessible paved/unpaved trail for pedestrians and bicyclists. An entry gate to the Zev Greenway is located south of Valleyheart Drive near the southeastern corner of the Project Site. The channelized Los Angeles River is located to the south of the Zev Greenway. The area along the southern edge of the river is improved with a bicycle path. Commercial uses are located to the south of the river and oriented to (facing) Ventura Boulevard, approximately 0.1 mile south of the Project Site. The Project vicinity is highly urbanized and generally built out. Ventura Boulevard directly to the south of the Project Site is developed with retail uses served by large surface parking lots, including parking areas between the commercial buildings and the Los Angeles River. Because Ventura Boulevard is located at the edge of the rising Santa Monica Mountains, residential neighborhoods in the hillside areas begin immediately to the south of this commercial strip.

¹ City of Los Angeles Tree Report Harvard-Westlake Campus, Carlberg Associates, October 2020. Included as an appendix to the Biological Resources Technical Report, which is included in Appendix D of this Draft EIR.

² The Planning Report, Zen Yaroslavsky LA River Greenway Trail: The Valley's 'Missing Link', October 30, 2014, <https://www.planningreport.com/2014/10/30/zev-yaroslavsky-la-river-greenway-trail-valleys-missing-link>, accessed July 2, 2020.

c) Existing Transportation System

The Project Site is served by a network of regional transportation facilities that provide access to the Studio City community and the greater metropolitan area. Regional access is provided by the Ventura Freeway (US-101/SR-134), located approximately 0.7 mile to the north of the Project Site. The Project Site is located approximately 1.8 miles to the west of the junction of SR-134 with the Hollywood Freeway (SR-170) and 3.6 miles to the east of the junction of US-101 with the San Diego Freeway (I-405).

Local east-west access is provided by Ventura Boulevard located approximately 0.1 mile to the south of the Project Site, and Moorpark Street located approximately 0.2 mile to the north of the Project Site. Direct north-south access to the Project Site between Moorpark Street and Ventura Boulevard is provided by Whitsett Avenue, which is adjacent and takes direct access to the Project Site.

The Project Site is located in an area well-served by public transportation. Several transit providers operate service within the immediate vicinity, including LADOT's DASH Van Nuys/Studio City bus and Metro local lines with stops at Whitsett Avenue/ Valley Spring Lane adjacent to the Project Site and at Whitsett/Ventura Boulevard, approximately 0.1 mile to the south.

d) Existing Conditions

Detailed descriptions of the environmental setting relevant to each of the environmental topics evaluated in this Draft EIR have been prepared and are included in Chapter IV, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, in Sections IV.A through IV.O, of this Draft EIR.

e) Land Use Plans

City land use plans applicable to the Project Site include the City of Los Angeles General Plan and the Sherman Oaks–Studio City–Toluca Lake–Cahuenga Pass Community Plan. Other local plans include the Los Angeles River Improvement Overlay (RIO). Regional plans that are applicable to the Project Site include the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) 2016 Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP).

2. Related Projects

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR consider the environmental effects of a proposed project individually, as well as cumulatively. As defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15355, cumulative impacts refer to two or more individual effects, which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts.

As set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15130, the determination of cumulative impacts is generally a two-step process. The first step is to determine whether or not the combined

effects from the Project and related projects, as identified below, would result in a potentially significant cumulative impact. If the answer is no, then the EIR only briefly needs to indicate why the cumulative impact is not significant and is not discussed in further detail in the EIR. If the answer is yes, then the analysis proceeds to the second step, which is to determine whether the Project's incremental effects are cumulatively considerable. CEQA Guidelines Section 15065(a)(3) defines "cumulatively considerable" to mean that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(a)(3), a project's contribution is less than cumulatively considerable if the project is required to implement or fund its fair share of a mitigation measure or measures designed to alleviate the cumulative impact. In addition, the lead agency is required to identify facts and analyses supporting its conclusion that the contribution will be rendered less than cumulatively considerable.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(b) further provides that the discussion of cumulative impacts reflect "the severity of the impacts and their likelihood of occurrence, but the discussion need not provide as great of detail as is provided for the effects attributable to the project alone." Rather, the discussion is to "be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness, and should focus on the cumulative impact to which the identified other projects contribute."

CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(b) states that complying with one of the following two protocols is necessary to provide an adequate discussion of significant cumulative impacts:

- (A) A list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency; or
- (B) A summary of projections contained in an adopted local, regional or statewide plan, or related planning document, that describes or evaluates conditions contributing to the cumulative effect. Such plans may include: a general plan, regional transportation plan, or plans for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. A summary of projections may also be contained in an adopted or certified prior environmental document for such a plan. Such projections may be supplemented with additional information such as a regional modeling program. Any such document shall be referenced and made available to the public at a location specified by the lead agency.

Cumulative study areas are defined based on an analysis of the geographical scope relevant to each particular environmental issue. Therefore, the cumulative study area for each individual environmental impact issue may vary. For example, a cumulative land use impact generally may only affect the compatibility of uses within the vicinity of the project site, while a cumulative air quality impact may affect the entire South Coast Air Basin. The specific boundaries and the projected growth within those boundaries for the cumulative

study area of each environmental issue are identified in the applicable environmental issue section in Chapter IV, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, of this Draft EIR.

A list of proposed development projects in the area of the Project that could affect conditions in the Project area (e.g., by generating population increases requiring public services) was prepared based on information obtained primarily from LADOT and the City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning (DCP). A total of five (5) potential related development projects have been identified within the vicinity of the Project Site for inclusion in the cumulative impact analysis for this EIR. These related projects are in varying stages of the approval/entitlement/development process and reflect the diverse range of land uses in the vicinity of the Project Site. Specifically, the related projects comprise a variety of uses, including apartments, retail, restaurant and other mixed-use land uses.

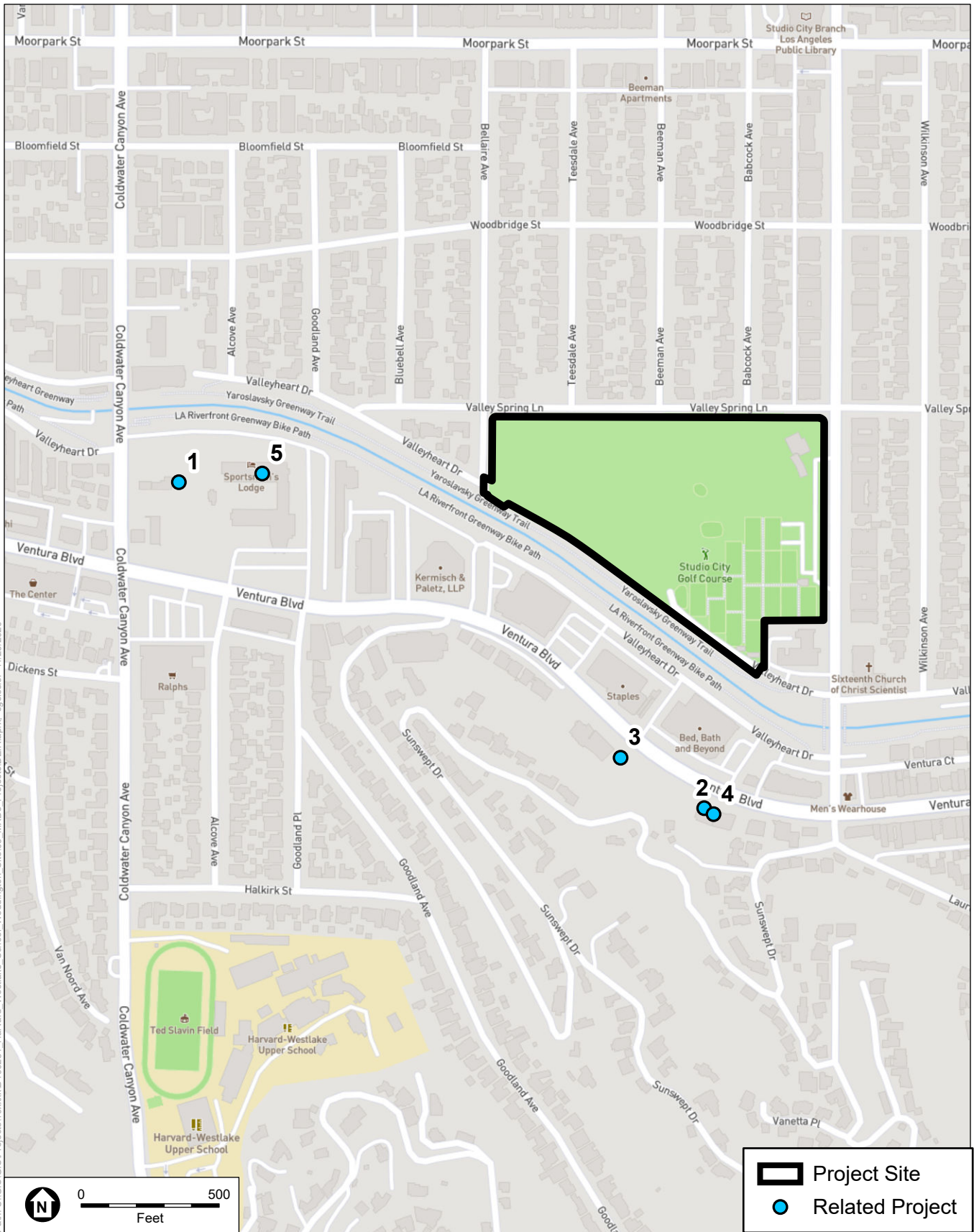
The list of five (5) identified related projects is provided in **Table III-1, Related Projects List**, with the locations of each of the related projects presented in **Figure III-1, Related Projects Map**. According to the LADOT Transportation Assessment Guidelines (TAG), related projects are new development within a one-half mile radius of the Project Site plus one-quarter mile from the farthest outlying intersection. There are two separate Sportsman Lodge projects (No. 1 and No. 5). The first is the replacement of the event/banquet facility with a shopping center with a gym and retail, which was approved in 2015. The second is a more recent project, which would involve the construction of apartments and restaurant/retail uses.

**TABLE III-1
RELATED PROJECTS LIST**

Project	Project Address	Land Use	Size	Unit
1	12833 Ventura Boulevard (Sportsman Lodge)	Addition of health club and restaurants to existing hotel	91.466	ksf
		Retail	10.747	ksf
2	12548 Ventura Boulevard	Apartments	62	Du
		Other	1.925	ksf
3	12582 Ventura Boulevard	Other	15.7	ksf
4	12544 Ventura Boulevard	Other	12.782	ksf
5	12833 Ventura Boulevard (Sportsman Lodge)	Apartments	504	DU
		Restaurant	30.0	ksf

ksf = thousand square feet; du = dwelling units

SOURCE: Fehr & Peers, 2020.



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SOURCE: Mapbox Streets; ESA, 2020.

Harvard-Westlake River Park Project

Figure III-1
Related Projects Map