

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of the Final EIR

An application for the proposed Harvard-Westlake River Park Project (Project) has been submitted to the City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning for discretionary review. The City of Los Angeles, as Lead Agency, determined that the Project is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to determine whether there is substantial evidence that the Project may have a significant effect on the environment.

As described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15089, the Lead Agency must evaluate comments received on the Draft EIR and prepare written responses and consider the information contained in a Final EIR before approving a project. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15132, a Final EIR consists of: (a) the Draft EIR or a revision of the Draft EIR; (b) comments and recommendations received on the Draft EIR either verbatim or in summary; (c) a list of persons, organizations, and public agencies commenting on the Draft EIR; (d) the responses of the Lead Agency to significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process; and (e) any other information added by the Lead Agency.

This Final EIR constitutes the second part of the EIR for the Project and is intended to be a companion to the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR for the Project, which was circulated for public review and comment from March 10, 2022 through May 10, 2022, constitutes the first part of the EIR and is incorporated by reference and bound separately (refer to Volumes 1 through 5 of the Draft EIR).¹

Accordingly, the EIR for the Project comprises two parts as follows:

- Part 1: Draft EIR and Appendices
 - Draft Environmental Impact Report (Chapters I through VIII)
 - Draft Environmental Impact Report – Appendices A through O
- Part 2: Final EIR and Appendices
 - Final Environmental Impact Report (Chapters 1 through 4)
 - Final Environmental Impact Report – Appendices A through J

¹ The hardcopy, printed version of the Draft EIR was bound in 5 separate volumes.

2. Organization of the Final EIR

The Final EIR consists of the following four chapters and 10 appendices:

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the purpose of the Final EIR, presents the contents of this Final EIR, provides a summary of the Project analyzed in the Draft EIR and design modifications to the Project made in response to comments received during the Draft EIR public comment period and feedback provided at Harvard-Westlake's community outreach events, provides an overview of the CEQA process, and summarizes the Final EIR public review process.

CHAPTER 2. RESPONSES TO COMMENTS

This chapter presents comments on the Draft EIR, as well as responses to those comments pertaining to significant environmental issues, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15088. The Department of City Planning received approximately 1,600 total comment letters from various agencies, organizations and individuals which were responded to in this Final EIR. Comment letters responded to in this Final EIR are included in Appendix A, Original Draft EIR Comment Letters, in this Final EIR.

CHAPTER 3. REVISIONS, CLARIFICATIONS, AND CORRECTIONS TO THE DRAFT EIR

This chapter includes revisions to the Draft EIR that represent minor revisions, clarifications, and corrections in response to the comments received on the Draft EIR and additional edits to provide clarification of Draft EIR text. Changes to the Draft EIR are shown with strikethrough text for deletions and double-underlined text for additions. As demonstrated in this Final EIR, the comments submitted on the Draft EIR, the responses to these comments, and the corrections and additions presented in Chapter 3 of this Final EIR, do not constitute significant new information warranting recirculation of the Draft EIR as set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5. Rather, the Draft EIR is comprehensive and has been prepared in accordance with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines.

CHAPTER 4. MITIGATION MONITORING PROGRAM

The Mitigation Monitoring Program (MMP) is the document that will be used by the enforcement and monitoring agencies responsible for the implementation of the Project's Mitigation Measures (MMs) and Project Design Features (PDFs). MMs and PDFs are listed by environmental topic.

FINAL EIR APPENDICES

- A:** Original Draft EIR Comment Letters
- B.1:** Supplemental Lighting Report Memorandum
- B.2:** Supplemental Lighting Report Appendices
- B.3:** Original Lighting Report (October 2021) – Appendix 2

- C:** Supplemental Carbon Sequestration and Canopy Study
- D:** Supplemental Historic Resources Memorandum
- E.1:** Supplemental Artificial Turf Field Materials Analysis – Exponent (December 2022)
- E.2:** Supplemental Analysis of Artificial Turf Fields - Gradient
- E.3:** FieldTurf Testing Report
- E.4:** Supplemental Artificial Turf Field Materials Analysis – Exponent (February 2023)
- F:** Supplemental Noise Analysis
- G:** Geotechnical Peer Review of Groundwater Recharge
- H:** Supplemental CalEEMod Modeling Runs
- I:** Supplemental Construction Health Risk Assessment
- J:** KPFF Memo – CDFW Comments
- K:** Supplemental Greenhouse Gas and Energy Modeling Data and Calculations
- L:** Traffic Signal Memorandum

3. Project Summary

a) Project Analyzed in Draft EIR

The Project Applicant, Harvard-Westlake School (School), is proposing to repurpose a site currently occupied by a private nine-hole, 27-par golf course and tennis facility, for use as an athletic and recreational facility for its students, employees and the general public.

The area proposed for the Project consists of a 16.1-acre (701,428-square-foot) parcel, owned by the School (Property) located at 4047, 4141, and 4155 N. Whitsett Avenue and 12506, 12600, and 12630 W. Valley Spring Lane; and a 1.1-acre (47,916-square-foot) parcel the School leases from the Los Angeles County Flood Control District (Leased Property) (portion of Assessor Parcel Number [APN] 2375-018-903), which collectively comprise the 17.2-acre (749,344-square-foot) project site (Project Site). The Property consists of one parcel 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 Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) Fire Station 78 to the southeast. The Leased Property is located between the Property and the Los Angeles River.

The Project would remove the existing private nine-hole, 27-par golf course, driving range, and tennis facility and would include the development of an 80,249-square-foot multi-purpose gymnasium, located in the southern portion of the Project Site; a 52-meter swimming pool; and eight tennis courts with bleacher seating located to the west of the pool area and in the middle area of the eight tennis courts. The Project would include two athletic fields, with Field A located in proximity to Whitsett Avenue in the southeastern

portion of the Project Site, and Field B, located in proximity to Valley Spring Lane and Bellaire Avenue, in the western portion of the Project Site. Field houses for maintenance and storage are proposed at each field. Bleacher seating for Field A would be located along both the east and west sidelines of the field area, and seating for Field B would be located along the north sideline of the field area.

The Project would include a below-grade parking structure located in the eastern portion of the Project Site, with approximately 503 automobile parking spaces. Access to the parking structure would be via a two-way driveway on Whitsett Avenue. A second driveway to access the parking structure would be via a drop-off and roundabout from Valleyheart Drive at the southeastern corner of the Project Site. This vehicle entrance area would also accommodate 29 surface parking spaces. The Project would also provide three security kiosks: a 180-square-foot ground-level security kiosk to the south of the tennis courts off of the north Whitsett Avenue pedestrian entrance, a 97-square-foot underground kiosk in the parking structure, and a 70-square-foot kiosk located in proximity to the roundabout and the at-grade parking.

The original, on-site Weddington Golf & Tennis clubhouse, including its café, is located on the northeastern portion of the Project Site and would remain as part of the Project. An existing putting green to the northeast of the clubhouse and the low brick retaining wall with weeping mortar along the northeastern edge of the Property would also be retained. The six golf ball-shaped light standards on the Project would also be retained and relocated to the northeastern portion of the Property, in proximity to the clubhouse and putting green. Following their relocation on the Project Site, the golf ball-shaped light standards would remain visible from the public right-of-way.

The Project would implement an extensive tree planting and landscaping program that would remove 240 of the existing 421 inventoried on- and off-site trees (four of which are deemed dead and, therefore, excluded from mitigation requirements), and plant 393 trees, resulting in a net increase of 153 trees beyond existing conditions (or a 36 percent increase). The Project would also provide approximately 5.4 acres (235,224 square feet) of publicly-accessible open space and landscaped pathways, along with a new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant pedestrian ramp connecting to the adjacent Zev Greenway trail. The landscaped, publicly-accessible pathways would circumnavigate the Project Site and cover a distance of approximately 0.75 mile. The publicly-accessible open space areas would be open to the public from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., seven days a week.

The Project would also include a 1-million-gallon stormwater capture and reuse system for water conservation and treatment purposes, which would collect and treat stormwater from the Project Site and a 39-acre residential neighborhood to the north of the Project Site.

Off-site from the Project, the Project would also provide improvements to the segment of Valleyheart Drive south of LAFD Fire Station 78 and would install an ADA-compliant

accessible pedestrian ramp leading to the Zev Greenway at Coldwater Canyon Avenue (Coldwater Canyon Avenue Riverwalk Path Ramp).

b) Design Modifications to the Project Based on Public Comments

As discussed here in Chapter 1, *Introduction*, Topical Response No. 2 – Modifications to the Project Design, in Chapter 2, *Response to Comments*, and Chapter 3, *Revisions, Clarifications, and Corrections to the Draft EIR*, of this Final EIR, specific components of the Project’s design were revised in response to comments received during the Draft EIR public comment period and feedback provided at Harvard-Westlake’s community outreach events. These included comments received from agencies, organizations, and individuals.

The design modifications include reducing the Project’s total quantity of field lights, reducing the number of subterranean parking spaces and the scale of the subterranean parking structure, reducing surface (at grade) parking, reducing the overall number of bleacher seats, reducing the use of glass walls/surfaces on Project structures, and reconfiguring and reducing the size and height of the swimming pool canopy. Design modifications also include the elimination of some on-site activity, such as diving competitions, and the elimination of diving boards. Individual water features (such as recirculating streams and ponds) would also be removed from the Project design. Also, in consultation with the City and in accordance with Los Angeles City Charter Sections 671, 672, and 673, the Project’s 1-million-gallon stormwater capture and reuse system was reduced in size (down to approximately 350,000 gallons pending final design) and scale so as to capture and treat stormwater only from the Project Site, and not from any off-site areas. Thus, the overall amount of excavation would be reduced from 250,000 cubic yards to 197,000 cubic yards. This reduction in grading would reduce the number of haul truck trips from 35,714 trips to 28,142, a reduction of 7,572 truck trips.²

Finally, it is acknowledged that while not in response to public comments, this Final EIR includes a correction in the number of solar panels, which reduces the number of solar panels on the gymnasium building. This correction was due to a design error that did not account for the required walkways between solar panels and has been corrected in this Final EIR.

The proposed design modifications are summarized in Table 2-2, *Summary of Project Design Modifications*, in Topical Response No. 2 – Design Modifications to the Project, in Chapter 2 of this Final EIR. In addition, corrections to the Draft EIR with the design modifications to the Project are included in Chapter 3 of this Final EIR. Within Chapter 3,

² The Project design modifications would result in a reduction in grading of 53,000 cubic yards. As each haul truck carries 14 cubic yards, that equates to a reduction of 3,786 trucks, or 7,572 truck trips.

relevant figures from the Draft EIR have also been revised to illustrate the design modifications to the Project.

(1) CEQA Implications

CEQA anticipates circumstances where new information can be included in a Final EIR without recirculation of the Draft EIR if the new information is intended to clarify or amplify information in the Draft EIR and does not result in significant new or magnified environmental effects.

In order to give a degree of finality to EIR documentation, CEQA requires recirculation of a Draft EIR only when “significant new information” is added to a Draft EIR after public notice of the availability of the Draft EIR has occurred, but before the EIR is certified.³ The CEQA Guidelines define “significant new information” as changes to an EIR which “deprive the public of a meaningful opportunity to comment upon a substantial adverse environmental effect of the project or a feasible way to mitigate or avoid such an effect (including a feasible project alternative) that the project’s proponents have declined to implement.”⁴ The CEQA Guidelines further provide four examples of categories of “significant new information,” as follows:

1. “A new significant environmental impact would result from the project or from a new mitigation measure proposed to be implemented.
2. A substantial increase in the severity of an environmental impact would result unless mitigation measures are adopted to reduce the impact to a level of insignificance.
3. A feasible project alternative or mitigation measure considerably different from others previously analyzed would clearly lessen the significant environmental impacts of the project, but the project’s proponents decline to adopt it.
4. The draft EIR was so fundamentally and basically inadequate and conclusory in nature that meaningful public review and comment were precluded. (Mountain Lion Coalition v. Fish & Game Com.(1989) 214 Cal.App.3d 1043).”

CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5 also provides that “[r]ecirculation is not required where the new information added to the EIR merely clarifies or amplifies or makes insignificant modifications in an adequate EIR.”⁵

The design modifications to the Project in response to public comments do not constitute “significant new information” pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5 because they do not “deprive the public of a meaningful opportunity to comment upon a substantial adverse environmental effect of the project or a feasible way to mitigate or avoid such an

³ California Public Resources Code Section 21092.1 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5.

⁴ CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5 (a)

⁵ CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5 (b)

effect that the project’s proponents have declined to implement,”⁶ nor do they fall into any of the four categories of “significant new information” provided in CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(a).

The design modifications would reduce the extent of the Project’s excavation activities (from 250,000 cubic yards to 197,000 cubic yards of excavation) and associated soil haul trips during construction. By doing so, the duration of the Project’s on-site and off-site significant and unavoidable construction noise impacts would be reduced as would construction-related emissions. The reduced number of parking spaces would have the effect of reducing traffic to/from the Project Site since no off-site parking would be permitted by the Project. The design modifications would reduce the Project’s less-than-significant impacts associated with lighting. The Project with the design modifications would still similarly comply with all applicable water quality regulations as analyzed in the Draft EIR. Also, the Draft EIR’s analysis of water supply did not take credit for water captured and reused by the on-site system, so the analysis of water supply impacts in the Draft EIR does not change with the reduced capacity of the stormwater capture and reuse system. Further, in an effort to reduce water demand, all previously contemplated water features within the Project Site have been removed.

With the Project’s design modifications, the overall composite operational noise levels from all on-site activities at the adjacent noise sensitive receptors would be similar as analyzed in the Draft EIR. Thus, no new significant noise impact would occur and operational noise impacts would be substantially similar to those evaluated in the Draft EIR.

Finally, the reduction in solar panels would have no new significant impacts and would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of environmental effects under CEQA thresholds.

Therefore, the proposed design modifications would not fall into Category 1 of CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(a), since the proposed design modifications would not result in any new significant environmental impacts. The proposed design modifications would not fall into Category 2 of CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(a) because they would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of any environmental impacts. The proposed design modifications would not fall into Category 3 of CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(a) because they are not part of a feasible project alternative or mitigation measure considerably different from others previously analyzed that would clearly lessen the significant environmental impacts of the project. Finally, the proposed design modifications would not fall into Category 4 of CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(a) because the City has determined the Draft EIR provided a comprehensive analysis of the environmental issues determined to have potentially significant impacts following completion of the Project’s Initial Study and EIR scoping process, and that analysis is adequate with the revisions, clarifications and corrections included in Chapter 3 of this

⁶ CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5 (a)

Final EIR. Technical analysis was provided by experts in their respective fields for those issues evaluated in the Draft EIR, where necessary. Responses to the Draft EIR comment letters were prepared in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15088 and have been provided in Chapter 2 of this Final EIR. The responses clarify information and analysis presented in the Draft EIR, with corrections and additions provided in Chapter 3.

The implementation of the proposed design modifications would not result in any additional significant impacts other than those already disclosed under the Project in the Draft EIR, nor would the design modifications result in any impacts of a different type or character from those studied under the Project in the Draft EIR. Therefore, the analysis of the Project's impacts in the Draft EIR applies to the Project with the design modifications providing the public with a meaningful opportunity to evaluate and comment on all of the potential impacts of the Project.

For the reasons explained above, no new significant information is introduced in the Final EIR that would warrant recirculation as set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5. Therefore, recirculation of the Draft EIR is not required.

With or without the Project design modifications, based on analysis included in the Draft EIR and Chapter 3 of this Final EIR, the Project would result in significant and unavoidable impacts related to Project-level and cumulative, on- and off-site noise and vibration (human annoyance) during construction. Furthermore, with or without the Project design modifications, all other potential impacts would be less than significant or mitigated to less-than-significant levels.

4. Overview of the CEQA Public Review Process

Below is a general overview of the environmental review process for the Project, which was conducted in accordance with CEQA.

a) Initial Study

At the onset of the environmental review process and pursuant to the provisions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, the City prepared an Initial Study and circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) for public comment to the State Clearinghouse, Office of Planning and Research, responsible agencies, and other interested parties on September 30, 2020 for a 30-day public review period. The Initial Study was included in Appendix A-2 of the Draft EIR, and the NOP was included in Appendix A-1.

The purpose of the NOP was to formally convey that the City was preparing a Draft EIR for the Project, notify the public regarding a public Scoping Meeting, and solicit input regarding the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the Draft EIR. The public scoping meeting was held on October 19, 2020 in an online format using GoToWebinar. City staff, environmental consultants, and Project representatives were available during this meeting. A copy of the prerecorded presentation is posted on

the Department of City Planning's website at <https://planning.lacity.org/development-services/eir>. The presentation materials and other documentation from the scoping meeting are provided in Appendix A-3, Scoping Meeting Materials, of the Draft EIR.

Comments received in response to the NOP and Scoping Meeting were taken into consideration in the preparation of the Draft EIR. A total of approximately 570 written comment letters and emails responding to the NOP were submitted to the City. Responses to the NOP were provided by various public agencies, organizations, businesses, interested parties, and area residents. Public comments received during the NOP circulation period are provided in Appendix A-4, NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments, of the Draft EIR.

b) Public Review of the Draft Environmental Impact Report

Following the circulation of the NOP, the City prepared technical studies and a Draft EIR to identify and evaluate the potential environmental effects of the Project, indicate whether any significant effects could be mitigated or avoided, and analyze potentially feasible alternatives to the Project. The Draft EIR was subject to a 62-day review period during which the document was made available to responsible and trustee agencies, interested parties, and the general public. The public review period commenced on March 10, 2022 and ended on May 10, 2022. The original review period was increased to 47 days because the end of the 45-day public review fell on the weekend. While the City met all applicable CEQA requirements during the initial 47-day public review period, the City, in response to strong public interest in extending the Draft EIR's review and comment period, extended the public review period for an additional 15 days for a total of 62 calendar days.

In compliance with the provision of Sections 15085(a) and 15087(a)(1) of the CEQA Guidelines, the City, serving as the Lead Agency (1) published a Notice of Completion and Availability (NOCA) of a Draft EIR, which indicated that the Draft EIR was available for review at the Department of City Planning (221 N. Figueroa Street, Suite 1350, Los Angeles, CA 90012); (2) provided a copy of the NOCA and Draft EIR to the Los Angeles Central Library, Studio City Branch Library and North Hollywood Amelia Earhart Regional Library; (3) posted the NOCA and the Draft EIR on the City's website at <https://planning.lacity.org/development-services/eir>; (4) prepared and transmitted a Notice of Completion (NOC) to the State Clearinghouse; (5) sent a copy of the NOCA to all property owners and occupants within 500 feet of the Project Site; (6) published availability of the Draft EIR in the Los Angeles Times; and (7) sent a NOCA to the last known name and address of all organizations and individuals who previously requested such notice in writing or attended public meetings about the Project; and filed a copy of the NOCA with the County Clerk. Proof of publication is available at the City.

The Department of City Planning received comment letters from approximately 1,600 commenters which were responded to in this Final EIR. The comment letters have been

categorized in Chapter 2 in this Final EIR in the following manner: five (5) letters from public agencies; 19 letters from organizations; five (5) Form letters providing general opposition and/or support of the Project from individuals (listed in each Form letter); and 254 individual letters. These letters, which were provided through written correspondence and emails, are presented and addressed in Chapter 2, *Responses to Comments*, in this Final EIR. Comment letters responded to in this Final EIR are included in Appendix A, Original Draft EIR Comment Letters, in this Final EIR.

c) Final Environmental Impact Report

Before approving a project, CEQA requires the Lead Agency to prepare and certify a Final EIR. The Draft EIR and this Final EIR will be submitted to the decision-makers for consideration prior to taking any action on the Project.

The Final EIR is available for public review at the City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning at the following location:

Mail: *Kimberly Henry
City of Los Angeles
Department of City Planning
221 N. Figueroa Street, Suite 1350
Los Angeles, California 90012*

Email: *kimberly.henry@lacity.org*

In addition, the Final EIR is available online at the Los Angeles Department of City Planning's website (<https://planning.lacity.org/development-services/eir>). The Final EIR can be purchased on CD-ROM or USB drive for \$5.00 per copy. Contact Kimberly Henry of the City of Los Angeles at kimberly.henry@lacity.org to purchase the CD-ROM or USB drive. Copies of the Final EIR are also available at the Los Angeles Central Library, Studio City Branch Library and North Hollywood Amelia Earhart Regional Library.

CEQA requires that the lead agency provide each public agency who commented on the Draft EIR with a copy of the lead agency's proposed response at least 10 days before certifying the Final EIR.