

# I. Introduction

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## 1. Purpose of the Draft EIR

As described in Sections 15121(a) and 15362 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, an environmental impact report (EIR) is an informational document that will inform decision makers and the general public of the environmental impacts resulting from the project, identify possible ways to minimize any significant effects, and consider reasonable project alternatives. The City of Los Angeles (City) is the Lead Agency under CEQA responsible for preparing this Draft EIR. This Draft EIR has been prepared in conformance with CEQA (California Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.), and the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR], Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.). The primary CEQA Guidelines sections governing the content of this document are CEQA Guidelines Sections 15120 through 15132 (Contents of an EIR), and CEQA Guidelines Section 15161 (Project EIR).

The City is responsible for processing and approving the Hilton Universal City Project (Project) pursuant to PRC Section 20167. The City will consider the information in this Draft EIR, along with other information that may be presented during the CEQA process, including the Initial Study and a Final EIR. The EIR will be used in connection with all other permits and all other approvals necessary for the construction and operation of the Project. The EIR will be used by the City's Department of City Planning (DCP); Department of Building and Safety (LADBS); Department of Transportation (LADOT); and Department of Public Works (LADPW), including the Bureaus of Engineering (BOE) and Sanitation (LASAN); and other responsible public agencies that must approve activities undertaken with respect to the Project.

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15121, this Draft EIR provides specific information regarding the environmental effects associated with development of the Project and ways to minimize any significant environmental effects through mitigation measures or reasonable alternatives to the Project. This Draft EIR complies with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064, which discusses determining the significance of the environmental effects caused by a project. For some effects, significant environmental impacts cannot be mitigated to a level considered less than significant; in such cases, impacts are considered significant and unavoidable. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15093(b), if a public agency approves a project that has significant impacts that are not substantially mitigated (i.e., significant unavoidable impacts where impacts cannot be mitigated to less-than-significant levels), the agency must 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 known as a "statement of overriding considerations."

This document analyzes the environmental effects of the Project, as described in detail in Chapter II, *Project Description*, of this Draft EIR to the degree of specificity appropriate to the actions by the Project, as required under CEQA Guidelines Section 15146. This analysis considers the actions associated with the Project to determine the short-term and long-term effects associated with their implementation. This Draft EIR discusses both the direct and indirect impacts of this Project, as well as the cumulative impacts associated with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. CEQA requires the preparation of an objective, full disclosure document to inform agency decision makers and the general public of the direct and indirect environmental effects of the proposed action, including mitigation measures and reasonable alternatives that can reduce or eliminate any identified significant adverse impacts.

## 2. EIR Public Review Process

In compliance with the CEQA Guidelines, the City has taken steps to provide opportunities for participation in the environmental process. During the preparation of the Draft EIR, an effort was made to contact various state, regional, and local government agencies and other interested parties to solicit comments and inform the public of the Project. As further described below, this included the distribution of an Initial Study and Notice of Preparation (NOP), which included noticing for a public scoping meeting.

### a) Initial Study

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15063(a), the City prepared an Initial Study. The Initial Study determined that the Project had the potential to result in significant impacts associated with a number of environmental issues. As a result, the Initial Study determined that this Draft EIR should address those issues where the Project could result in significant environmental impacts and consider mitigation measures.

The Draft EIR focuses primarily on changes in the environment that would result from the Project, individually and cumulatively with other development projects. The Draft EIR identifies potentially significant direct and indirect impacts resulting from construction and operation of the Project and provides project design features (PDFs) and mitigation measures to reduce or avoid such effects. Based on public input and the results of the Initial Study, this Draft EIR addresses environmental effects in the following areas:

- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources (Historical and Archaeological)
- Energy
- Geology and Soils (including Paleontological Resources)
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hydrology and Water Quality

- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Public Services (Fire Protection and Police Protection)
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems (Wastewater and Water Supply)

Based on the Initial Study, issues for which no significant impacts are anticipated to occur are addressed in Chapter VI, *Other CEQA Considerations*, of this Draft EIR. See also the Initial Study in **Appendix A-2** of this Draft EIR.

### **b) Notice of Preparation**

Pursuant to the provision of CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, the City circulated an NOP to State, regional, and local agencies; interested organizations; and members of the public for a 30-day period, commencing on October 6, 2020, and ending on November 4, 2020. The purpose of the NOP was to formally convey that the City was preparing a Draft EIR for the Project and to solicit input regarding the scope and content of the Draft EIR. See **Appendix A-1**, *Notice of Preparation*, of this Draft EIR.

### **c) Public Scoping Meeting**

The NOP included notification that a public scoping meeting would be held to further inform public agencies and other interested parties of the Project, share information regarding the environmental process, and to solicit input regarding the scope and content of the Draft EIR. The public scoping meeting was held on October 20, 2020, in an online format using GoToWebinar. City staff, environmental consultants, and Project representatives were made available during this meeting. The scoping meeting recording 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 this Draft EIR.

### **d) Comments Received**

A total of four written comment letters and emails responding to the NOP were submitted to the City. Responses to the NOP were provided by the following public agencies and organizations: California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 7, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), and the Studio City Residents Association. Public comments received during the NOP circulation period are provided in **Appendix A-4**, *NOP Comments*, of this Draft EIR, and are summarized in the *Executive Summary*.

### 3. Format of the Draft EIR

The Draft EIR includes an *Executive Summary*, eight chapters, and appendices, which are organized as follows:

**Executive Summary.** This portion of the Draft EIR provides an overview of the entire document in a concise, summarized format. It briefly describes the Project (location and key Project features), the CEQA review process and focus, identifies effects found to be significant and unavoidable, identifies areas of controversy, provides a summary of the Project alternatives (descriptions and conclusions regarding comparative impacts), and provides a summary of Project impacts, PDFs and mitigation measures, and the level of impact significance following implementation of mitigation measures.

- I **Introduction.** This chapter describes the purpose of the EIR, including CEQA compliance requirements, the steps undertaken to date regarding implementation of the CEQA process, and the Draft EIR's organization.
- II **Project Description.** This chapter describes the location, objectives, and physical and operational characteristics of the proposed Project.
- III **Environmental Setting.** This chapter presents an overview of the Project's environmental setting, including on-site and surrounding land uses. This chapter also provides a list and the mapped locations of past, present, and probable future projects (i.e., related projects) considered in the analysis of potential Project contributions to cumulative impacts.
- IV **Environmental Impact Analysis.** This chapter contains the environmental setting, regulatory framework, methodology, thresholds of significance, Project characteristics and/or PDFs, Project-specific and cumulative impact analyses, mitigation measures, and conclusions regarding the level of significance after mitigation for each of the following environmental issues: (A) Air Quality; (B) Biological Resources; (C) Cultural Resources (Historical and Archaeological); (D) Energy; (E) Geology and Soils (including Paleontological Resources); (F) Greenhouse Gas Emissions; (G) Hydrology and Water Quality; (H) Land Use and Planning; (I) Noise; (J) Public Services – Fire Protection and Police Protection; (K) Transportation; (L) Tribal Cultural Resources; and (M) Utilities and Service Systems –Water Supply and Wastewater Infrastructure.
- V **Alternatives.** This chapter describes a reasonable range of alternatives to the Project, including Alternative 1 – No Project/No Build Alternative; Alternative 2 – Surface Parking Alternative; and Alternative 3 – Office Use Alternative. This chapter also evaluates the environmental effects of the alternatives for each issue area analyzed in the Draft EIR.
- VI **Other CEQA Considerations.** This chapter includes a discussion of issues required by CEQA that are not covered in other chapters. This includes significant

unavoidable impacts, reasons why the Project is being proposed notwithstanding significant unavoidable impacts, significant irreversible environmental changes, growth-inducing impacts, potential secondary effects caused by the implementation of the mitigation measures for the Project, and effects found not to be significant.

**VII List of EIR Preparers and Organizations and Persons Contacted.** This chapter lists the persons, public agencies, and organizations that were consulted or who contributed to the preparation of this Draft EIR.

**VIII References.** This chapter lists the references and sources used in the preparation of this Draft EIR.

The Environmental Analyses in this Draft EIR are supported by the following appendices:

- Appendix A – Notice of Preparation (NOP), Initial Study, Scoping Meeting Materials, and NOP and Scoping Meeting Comments
  - A-1 Notice of Preparation
  - A-2 Initial Study
  - A-3 Scoping Meeting Materials
  - A-4 NOP Comments
- Appendix B – Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Emissions Technical Documentation
- Appendix C – Biological Resources Documentation
- Appendix D – Cultural Resources Assessment Report
- Appendix E – Geotechnical and Paleontological Resources Documentation
  - E-1 Geotechnical Investigation
  - E-2 Paleontological Resources Assessment Report
- Appendix F – Energy Calculation Worksheets
- Appendix G – Hydrology and Water Quality Report
- Appendix H – Land Use Plans and Policies: Project Consistency Tables
- Appendix I – Noise and Vibration Technical Appendix
- Appendix J – Public Service Provider Correspondence
  - J-1 Los Angeles Fire Department Correspondence
  - J-2 Los Angeles Police Department Correspondence
- Appendix K – Transportation Assessment
  - K-1 2020 Transportation Assessment
  - K-2 2020 LADOT Correspondence Approving the Transportation Assessment

- K-3 2022 Transportation Analysis Addendum
- K-4 2023 Transportation Analysis Addendum
- K-5 Alternative 3 VMT Calculator Results with TDM
- Appendix L – Tribal Cultural Resources Technical Report
- Appendix M – Utilities Documentation
  - M-1 Utility Infrastructure Technical Report
  - M-2 Water Supply Assessment
  - M-3 LADWP WSA Correspondence

## 4. Public Review of the Draft EIR

The Draft EIR is subject to a 45-day review period in which the document is made available to responsible and trustee agencies and interested parties. 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 (NOC) and a Notice of Availability (NOA) of a Draft EIR that 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 NOC/NOA and Draft EIR to the Los Angeles Central Library, Frances Howard Goldwyn – Hollywood Regional Library, and Will & Ariel Durant Branch Library; (3) posted the NOC/NOA and the Draft EIR on the City’s website at <https://planning.lacity.org/development-services/eir>; (4) prepared and transmitted the NOC to the State Clearinghouse; (5) sent a copy of the NOC/NOA to all property owners and occupants within 1,000 feet of the Project Site; and (6) sent a copy of the NOC/NOA 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. Proof of publication is available at the City. The public review period commenced on November 16, 2023, and will end on January 15, 2024, for a total of 60 days.

Any public agency or members of the public desiring to comment on the Draft EIR must submit their comments in writing or send them via email to the following address prior to the end of the public review period:

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

**Email:** *james.harris@lacity.org*

Upon the close of the public review period, the City will proceed to evaluate and prepare responses to all relevant oral and written comments received from public agencies and other interested parties during the public review period. A Final EIR will then be prepared. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15132, the Final EIR will consist of possible revisions to the Draft EIR, comments submitted by responsible agencies or reviewing parties during the public circulation period for the Draft EIR, and City responses to those comments. After the Final EIR is completed and at least 10 days prior to its certification, responses to comments made by public agencies on the Draft EIR will be provided to the commenting agencies.

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