



NOTICE OF PREPARATION FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

PROPOSED SIERRA MADRE GENERAL PLAN HOUSING, LAND USE, SAFETY, and CIRCULATION ELEMENT UPDATE

To: Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report in Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act

Date: April 15, 2021

From: City of Sierra Madre; Planning & Community Preservation Department
232 West Sierra Madre Boulevard
Sierra Madre, CA 91024

Contact: Vincent Gonzalez
Director of Planning & Community Preservation
(626) 355-7138

The City of Sierra Madre is the Lead Agency for this project and intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to comply with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, after a Lead Agency decides an EIR is required, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) describing the project and its potential environmental effects shall be prepared.

Agencies: The City requests your agency's views on the scope and content of the environmental information relevant to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project, in accordance with California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15082(a).

Organizations and Interested Parties: The City requests your comments and concerns regarding the environmental issues associated with adoption of the 2021-2029 Housing Element and associated minor updates to the Land Use, Safety, and Circulation Elements of the City of Sierra Madre General Plan.

Project Title: City of Sierra Madre 2021-2029 Housing, Land Use, Safety, and Circulation Element General Plan Update EIR.

Project Location: City of Sierra Madre (citywide) in the County of Los Angeles (see Figure 1 attached).

Project Description: The project consists of a comprehensive update to the Housing Element and related updates to the Land Use Element and Land Use Map of the City of Sierra Madre General Plan. The project also includes updates to the City's Zoning Code, Zoning Map, and updates to the Safety Element and Circulation Element in compliance with new State rules. The City does not include designated environmental justice communities. Therefore, policies addressing environmental justice issues will be included in the Land Use, Safety, and Circulation Element updates and a standalone Environmental Justice Element is not required.

Housing Element Update

The City of Sierra Madre, along with all cities and counties in California, is mandated by California State law to prepare a Housing Element update for State certification every eight years. The Housing Element is a state-mandated part of the City’s General Plan and includes goals, policies, programs and objectives to further the development, improvement and preservation of housing in Sierra Madre in a manner that is aligned with community desires, as well as regional growth objectives and State law. Local governments must adequately plan to meet the existing and projected housing needs of all economic segments of the community. Specifically, State Government Code Section 65583 requires the Housing Element to identify and analyze existing and projected housing needs, and establish goals, policies, and actions to address these housing needs, including adequate provision of affordable and special-needs housing (e.g., housing for seniors and persons with disabilities). State law requires local jurisdictions to identify available sites that have the appropriate land use and zoning to accommodate estimated housing growth projections.

On January 28, 2014, the City of Sierra Madre adopted the 2014–2021 Housing Element. The Element included the provision of sufficient land for the construction of the housing units that the City of Sierra Madre needed to accommodate the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) by 2021. The 2014-2021 RHNA allocation equaled 55 new housing units.

The RHNA quantifies the need for housing in every region throughout the state and is determined by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). The RHNA is mandated by state law and is meant to inform the local planning process by addressing existing and future housing need resulting from estimated growth in population, employment, and households. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is responsible for allocating the RHNA to each city and county in its region, which includes Sierra Madre.

In August 2019, the HCD issued its final Regional Housing Need Determination to SCAG, stating that the minimum regional housing need for the SCAG region is 1.3 million new housing units. HCD then directed SCAG to develop a methodology to allocate all 1.34 million units throughout the region, based on statutory guidelines for housing needs and development.

SCAG developed a methodology and distributed a RHNA allocation to all the cities and counties in its region, including the City of Sierra Madre for the 2021-2029 Housing Element planning period. The City’s total RHNA for the 2021-2029 planning period is 204 units, allocated to specific income groups as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: City of Sierra Madre Regional Housing Needs Allocation

	Housing Units Needed by Income Category (% of Los Angeles County Area Median Income)				Total RHNA
	Very Low (31-50%)	Low (51-80%)	Moderate (81-120%)	Above Moderate (120% or more)	
Housing units needed	79	39	35	51	204

One of the important steps in the Housing Element update process is to identify sites that can accommodate the housing units assigned to Sierra Madre per the above RHNA allocation table, at all income levels. Site selection is conducted based on an analysis of site-specific constraints, including zoning, access to utilities, location, development potential, density and whether or not the site is identified in a previous Housing Element. In order to count toward the RHNA allocation, sites must be in a zoning

category that meets a minimum residential density standard, have a minimum lot size, and are either vacant or underutilized. Underutilized sites are sites that have not been developed to the maximum capacity allowed by the zoning category and thus provide the potential for more residential homes on a site. When a local jurisdiction cannot demonstrate that there are enough vacant or underutilized sites to adequately meet their RHNA allocation, a ‘rezoning program’ must be put into place. A rezoning program ensures that there are enough sites with sufficient densities to address the housing need identified through the RHNA.

Sierra Madre does not currently have an adequate number of sites with zoning in place to meet the RHNA requirements for the income groups identified in Table 1. Through a yearlong process with input both from the community and City decision-making bodies, the City has identified 10 possible housing sites (3 existing and 7 new candidate sites) along with accessory dwelling units to be dispersed throughout the residential zones, to address Sierra Madre’s RHNA obligation by income category. Table 2 provides information on the existing and proposed General Plan designations and zoning for the proposed housing sites. Figure 1 shows the proposed project site locations.

Land Use Element

The Land Use Element of the General Plan will be updated to reflect new housing sites identified in the Housing Element. This will include establishing two new multi-family residential land use categories (R-3-20 and R-3-30), creating an Affordable Housing Overlay on select congregational sites, along with minor changes to the Land Use table and map to accommodate residential land uses on the sites identified to meet the RHNA allocation.

Safety Element

The purpose of the Safety Element Update is to ensure consistency with the Housing Element Update and to comply with recent State legislation and guidelines (including Assembly Bill 162, Senate Bill 1241, Senate Bill 99, Assembly Bill 747, Senate Bill 1035 and Senate Bill 379). Technical amendments will be made to the Safety Element to achieve compliance with State, regional, and local policies and guidelines. The technical amendments will incorporate data and maps, address vulnerability to climate change; and incorporate policies and programs from the City’s Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Safety Element amendments will be submitted to the California Geological Survey, California Office of Emergency Services, California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, and Federal Emergency Management Agency for review.

**Table 2: Proposed Project Sites
Existing and Proposed General Plan and Zoning Designations**

Map ID	Site Acreage	Existing General Plan	Proposed General Plan	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Net Dwelling Unit Capacity Potential
1	2.44	Residential High Density-13 du/acre (1.64 ac) Residential High Density-20 du/acre (0.8 ac)	Residential High Density-30 du/acre	R-2, R-3, R-3H	R-3-30	48
2	2.81	Residential High Density-13 du/acre	Residential High Density- 20 du/acre	R-3	R-3-20	27
3	0.92	Residential High Density-13 du/acre	Residential High Density-30 du/acre	R-3	R-3-30	10

Map ID	Site Acreage	Existing General Plan	Proposed General Plan	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning	Net Dwelling Unit Capacity Potential
4	0.34	Residential High Density-13 du/acre	Residential High Density-20 du/acre	R-3	R-3-20	5
A	0.73	I	Affordable Housing Overlay	I	AHO 32-35 du/ac	24
B	0.66	I	Affordable Housing Overlay	I	AHO 32-35 du/ac	21
C	0.73	RH	Affordable Housing Overlay	R-3, C	AHO 32-35 du/ac	23
D	0.83	I	Affordable Housing Overlay	I	AHO 32-35 du/ac	27
The Meadows	17	I	RL	I	R-1	42
Stonegate	32	H	RL	HM	HM	27

Source: City of Sierra Madre, City of Sierra Madre 2015 General Plan Map and 2017 Zoning Map

AHO = Affordable Housing Overlay

C = Commercial

HM = Hillside Management

H = Hillside

I = Institutional

RH = Residential Medium/High Density

RL = Residential Low Density

R-1 = One Family Residential

R-2 = Two Family Residential

R-3 = Multiple Family Residential

Circulation Element

Minor updates will be made to the Circulation Element to replace references to adopted level of service (LOS thresholds with vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as a metric to evaluate environmental impacts of proposed projects. Level of service is a measure to describe how well roadway intersections and other transportation facilities operate for drivers. Vehicle miles traveled evaluates the number of miles traveled by each vehicle. This shift in standard is mandated by the State as part of Senate Bill 375 in keeping with the State's goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, encourage infill development and improve public health through active transportation (e.g., bicycling and walking).

Requested Actions: The City take the following actions:

- Certification of the EIR prepared for the project;
- Adoption of the General Plan amendments to update the Housing Element;
- Adoption of General Plan Land Use Element policies and Map;
- Adoption of General Plan amendments to the Safety Element;
- Adoption of General Plan amendments to the Circulation Element; and
- Adoption of Zoning Code amendments.

Upon adoption, the 2021-2029 Housing Element will be submitted to the California Department of Housing and Community Development for final review and certification.

Probable Environmental Effects: The EIR will evaluate whether implementing the proposed project would potentially result in one or more significant environmental effects. The following issue areas will be addressed in the EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

Issues Scoped Out from Analysis in the EIR

The City anticipates that the project would have less than significant or no impacts on the following environmental issue areas. These areas will not be discussed in the EIR for the reasons discussed below.

Agriculture and Forestry Resources

No forestry resources or timberlands are located within the city, nor does the city (or surrounding communities) contain agricultural land in active production. Therefore, this issue will not be discussed in the EIR.

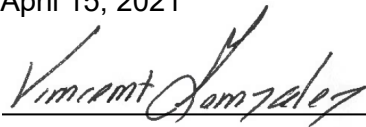
Mineral Resources

No significant mineral resources have been identified in the city, as stated in the City’s General Plan. None of the candidate housing sites are used for mineral extraction, nor are any of the sites designated as an important mineral recovery site. Therefore, there would be no impact on mineral resources and this issue will not be discussed in the EIR.

Public Review Period: The City has made this Notice of Preparation (NOP) available for public review and comment pursuant to Californian Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15082(a). The comment period for the NOP begins April 15, 2021 and ends May 14, 2021.

Comment: This notice commences a thirty-day review period during which the City welcomes and will consider all written comments regarding potential environmental impacts of the project and issues to be addressed in the EIR. Comment should be submitted by Wednesday, May 14, 2021 by 3 PM. If you are commenting on behalf of an agency or organization, please indicate a contact person for your agency or organization. Please direct your comments to Vincent Gonzalez, Director of Planning and Community Preservation Department, City of Sierra Madre, 232 W. Sierra Madre Boulevard, Sierra Madre, CA 91024; (626) 355-4239; vgonzalez@cityofsierramadre.com.

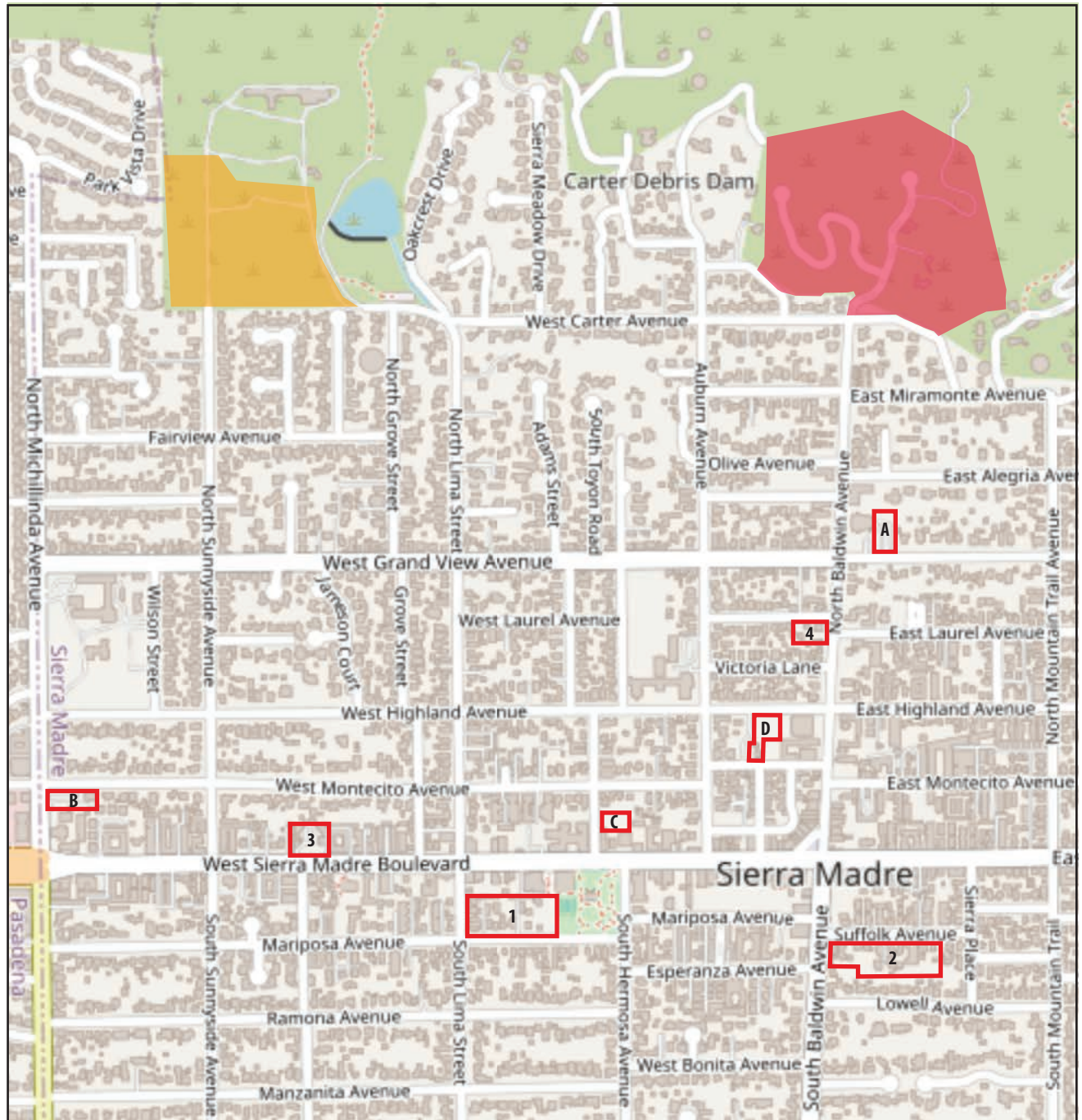
Date: April 15, 2021

Signature:  _____
Vincent Gonzalez

Title: Director of Planning and Community Preservation

Telephone: (626) 355-7138

Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15082(a), 15103, 15375.



LEGEND

Site 1 261 Mariposa Ave
271 Mariposa Ave
293 Mariposa Ave
297 Mariposa Ave
307 Mariposa Ave
313 Mariposa Ave
30 Lima Street
46 Lima Street
54 Lima Street


Site 2 80 Baldwin Ave
18 Suffolk Ave
30 Suffolk Ave
40 Suffolk Ave
56 & 58 Suffolk Ave
62, 64, 66 Suffolk Ave
68 Suffolk Ave
90 Suffolk Ave
92 & 100 Suffolk Ave


Site A St. Rita Catholic Church & School
318 N Baldwin Ave
34 E Alegria Ave
50 E Alegria Ave
50 E Alegria Ave

Site B United Methodist Church
695 W Sierra Madre Blvd

Site C Old North Church
191 W Sierra Madre Blvd
201 W Sierra Madre Blvd
191 W Sierra Madre Blvd
34 N Hermosa Ave
40 N Hermosa Ave

Site D Bethany Church & School
93 N Baldwin Ave
41 W Montecito Ave
49 W Montecito Ave
65 W Montecito Ave
71 W Montecito Ave
70 W Highland Ave
56 W Highland Ave
42 W Highland Ave

 MEADOWS SUBDIVISION: This lot is the planned subdivision of the lower 20 acres of the existing Mater Dolorosa property, then planned to be subdivided into 42 Residential lots and 1 City Park.

 STONEGATE SUBDIVISION: These parcels are the completed subdivision of the One Carter property to 27 Residential lots and 2 undevelopable lots.

Site 3 491 W Sierra Madre Blvd

Site 4 215 N Baldwin Ave



Source: OpenStreetMaps, March 2021.

Figure 1
Project Vicinity Map