

III. Environmental Setting

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A. Overview of Environmental Setting

This section of the Draft EIR provides an 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 environmental setting information is provided in each of the environmental issue analyses found in Section IV, Environmental Impact Analysis, of this Draft EIR. In addition, Section II, Project Description, of this Draft EIR, provides additional information regarding existing conditions at the Project Site.

1. Project Location and Environmental Setting

The Project Site is located in the Central City Community Plan area of the City of Los Angeles (City) with addresses that include 700 South Flower Street, 700 West 7th Street, and 711 and 775 South Hope Street. The Project Site is centrally located within Downtown Los Angeles and consists of an entire City block bounded by 7th Street to the north, 8th Street to the south, Hope Street to the east, and Flower Street to the west. Regional access to the Project Site is provided by the Harbor Freeway (State Route 110 [SR-110]), located approximately 0.25 mile west of the Project Site; the Santa Monica Freeway (Interstate 10 [I-10]), located approximately 1 mile south of the Project Site; and the Hollywood Freeway (U.S. Highway 101 [US-101]), located approximately 1 mile north of the Project Site. The Project Site is well served by a variety of public transit options provided by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) Downtown Area Short Hop (DASH), LADOT Commuter Express (CE), Antelope Valley Transportation Authority (AVTA), Santa Monica Big Blue Bus (BBB), Foothill Transit, Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), Montebello Bus Lines, and Torrance Transit. Specifically, the Project Site is served by Metro local lines 51 and 66; LADOT CE routes 409, 422, 423, 431, 437, 448, and 534; LADOT DASH A, E, and F; AVTA 785; Metro Express 460 and J (Silver) line; Torrance Transit Route 4X; and OCTA 701. In addition to the bus lines that provide service within the Project Site vicinity, the Metro B, D, A, and E Lines are fixed rail lines that operate adjacent to the Project Site at the Metro 7th Street/Metro Center Station, which has direct access to the Project Site through a pedestrian portal in the Project Site's plaza.

a. On-Site Conditions

The Project Site is currently occupied by The Bloc, a mixed-use development that encompasses an entire City block. The northern portion of the Project Site (outside of the

Development Area) is developed with a 33-story office tower, a 26-story hotel tower, and commercial uses that surround the outdoor plaza and front along the streets. A direct portal to the Metro 7th Street/Metro Center Station is located in The Bloc's outdoor plaza. The southern portion of the Project Site that comprises the Development Area is currently developed with an existing nine-story parking/retail podium building and below grade levels, which include two basement levels (including one level of vehicle parking and one level of loading area and a gym/fitness use), five stories of enclosed parking, four stories of existing retail floor area (one of which includes theater uses), and rooftop parking. There is an approximate 11-foot grade change from the high point of the Project Site at 7th and Flower Streets and the low point near 8th and Hope Streets. The existing uses total approximately 1,424,314 square feet of floor area and comprise 656,423 square feet of office space, 28,599 square feet of medical office space, 269,622 square feet of retail uses, 23,180 square feet of restaurant/bar uses, 30,363 square feet of fitness uses, a 28,770-square-foot theater that includes 569 fixed seats, and a 387,357-square-foot hotel that includes 496 rooms and 25,282 square feet of meeting/banquet spaces. The Project Site also includes approximately 1,971 parking spaces.

Vehicular access to the Project Site is provided via existing ingress/egress driveways along Hope Street, 8th Street, and Flower Street. Primary vehicle access is provided via two ingress/egress driveways along Flower and Hope Streets. Additionally, along 8th Street, there is one ingress driveway and one egress driveway, as well as a separate driveway located mid-block along 8th Street, which is designated for delivery vehicles to access the subterranean loading area. The hotel's porte-cochere, which provides a pick-up/drop-off area and valet parking for hotel guests, is located mid-block along Hope Street. Pedestrian access to the Project Site is located along Hope Street, 8th Street, Flower Street, and 7th Street.

Existing landscaping adjacent to the Project Site includes 25 right-of-way (ROW) trees. There are no private property trees associated with the Project Site. None of the 25 ROW trees are considered to be protected by the City of Los Angeles Protected Tree and Shrubs (Ordinance No. 186,873).¹

b. Surrounding Uses

The area surrounding the Project Site is highly urbanized and includes a mix of mid- to high-rise buildings containing a variety of uses, including commercial (office, retail and restaurant), multi-family residential, institutional, and parking uses. Properties

¹ Carlberg Associates, *City of Los Angeles Tree Inventory Report—The Bloc, 700 S. Flower Street, 700 W. 7th Street, and 711 S. Hope Street, Los Angeles, California 90017, September 17, 2021. See Appendix A of this Draft EIR.*

immediately adjacent to the Project Site are zoned C2-4D with a Regional Center Commercial land use designation. Properties to the north of the Project Site along 7th Street are developed with the mid-rise Roosevelt Lofts and 655 Hope Condos adaptive reuse buildings. These multi-story, mixed-use buildings contain ground floor commercial uses that include various dining establishments. Properties to the south of the Project Site along 8th Street are improved with two multi-story mixed-use buildings with ground floor commercial uses (8th+Hope Apartments and the Gas Company Lofts). Properties to the east of the Project Site along Hope Street are improved with a mid-rise commercial and retail building, a small religious structure (the Third Church of Christ, Scientist of Los Angeles Reading Room), and parking facilities. Properties to the west of the Project Site along Flower Street are improved with two multi-story parking garages, a surface parking lot, and a multi-story office building with ground floor commercial uses that include dining establishments. In addition, construction of a 41-story mixed-use building is underway at the intersection of Figueroa Street and 8th Street. In the Project vicinity, beyond these land uses are numerous high-rise commercial and residential buildings that form the Downtown skyline.

2. Land Use Plans

City land use plans applicable to the Project Site include the following: the City of Los Angeles General Plan and Framework Element; Mobility Plan 2035; the Central City Community Plan; Downtown Design Guide: Urban Design Standards and Guidelines; and the Citywide Urban Design Guidelines. Regional plans that are applicable to the Project Site include the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) and the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP).

The Project Site is located within the Financial Core of the Central City Community Plan area. Under the Central City Community Plan, which was last updated in January 2003, the Project Site has a General Plan land use designation of Regional Center Commercial. The Project Site is zoned C2-4D by the LAMC. The “C2” denotes the Commercial Zone pursuant to LAMC Section 12.14; the number “4” in the Project Site’s zone designation of C2-4D denotes Height District 4, which allows a maximum FAR of 13 to 1; and the “D” denotes the D Limitation, enacted under Ordinance No. 164,307 (Subarea 1915) effective January 30, 1989, which limits FAR to a maximum of 6 to 1 with some exceptions, including the Transfer of Floor Area Rights (TFAR). The City is currently in the process of updating the Central City Community Plan in conjunction with the Central City North Community Plan, whose areas together comprise Downtown Los Angeles, in a combined planning process referred to as the DTLA 2040 Plan. On May 3, 2023, the City Council voted to approve the DTLA 2040 Plan and a zoning code update for the plan areas. The ordinances are currently under review with the City Attorney. As currently proposed by the draft DTLA 2040 Plan, the Project Site will be designated as part of the

Transit Core land use designation, which corresponds to the Project Site's proposed zone which will allow a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of between 9:1 and 13:1, with general uses that include multi-family residential, regional retail and services, office, hotel, and entertainment uses.

The Project Site is also located within a Transit Priority Area, as defined by Senate Bill 743 and City Zoning Information File No. 2452 and is located within 0.5 mile of public transit as defined by Assembly Bill 2097 (Government Code Section 65863.2 (a)). Additionally, the Project Site is located within the boundaries of the Downtown Streetcar, Metro Right-of-Way Project Area, Downtown Design Guide Project Area, the Freeway Adjacent Advisory Notice for Sensitive Uses, the Greater Downtown Housing Incentive Area, and the Los Angeles State Enterprise Zone.

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B. Related Projects

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15130 requires that an Environmental Impact Report (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 proposed 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 proposed 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 would 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 schools impact may only affect the schools serving 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 Section IV, Environmental Impact Analysis, of this Draft EIR.

A list of development projects in the area of the Project that could affect conditions in the Project area (e.g., by generating construction noise and/or generating population increases) was prepared based on information obtained primarily from LADOT and Los Angeles City Planning (City Planning Department). In accordance with LADOT's July 2020 Transportation Assessment Guidelines, a total of 44 potential related development projects have been identified within 0.5 mile 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 consist of a variety of land uses reflecting the diverse range of land uses in the vicinity of the Project Site. The related projects comprise a variety of uses, including apartments, condominiums, restaurants, hotels, office, and retail uses, as well as mixed-use developments incorporating some or all of these elements.

The related projects are listed in Table III-1 on page III-8 of this Draft EIR, which identifies the location of each related project along with the types of land uses. The locations of Related Project Nos. 1 through 44 are shown in Figure III-1 on page III-12. It is noted that some of the related projects may not be built out by 2031 (i.e., the Project buildout year), may never be built, or may be approved and built at reduced densities. To

provide a conservative forecast, the future baseline forecast assumes that Related Project Nos. 1 through 44 are fully built out by 2031, unless otherwise noted.

As discussed above, the City Planning Department is currently updating the Central City Community Plan as part of the DTLA 2040 Plan. The purpose of the DTLA 2040 Plan is to develop and implement a future vision for Downtown Los Angeles that supports and sustains ongoing revitalization while thoughtfully accommodating projected future growth.² Downtown is home to a diverse range of uses, industries and distinct neighborhoods that sit at the center of an expanding regional transportation network.

According to projections in the draft DTLA 2040, an additional estimated 125,000 people, 70,000 housing units, and 55,000 jobs would be added to the Downtown area by the year 2040.³ In partnership with the Downtown community, the City Planning Department is anticipated to incorporate growth trends into the DTLA 2040 Plan and other Downtown policies, plans, and programs. As such, the DTLA 2040 Plan would include development options, densities, and intensities to bring the 2003 Central City Community Plan up-to-date as a planning tool. Only the initial period of any such projected growth would overlap with the Project's future baseline forecast, as the Project is anticipated to be completed in 2031, well before the Community Plan Update's horizon year. Moreover, the Project's projected buildout and occupancy years are similar to those of many related projects identified below. Accordingly, it can be assumed that the projected growth reflected by the list of related projects, which itself is a conservative assumption as discussed above, would account for any overlapping growth that may be assumed by the Community Plan Update upon its adoption. See Section IV.E, Land Use and Planning, of this Draft EIR for further discussion.

² *City of Los Angeles, Downtown Los Angeles Community Plan Update*, <https://planning.lacity.org/plans-policies/community-plan-update/downtown-los-angeles-community-plan-update>, accessed January 10, 2023.

³ *City of Los Angeles, Downtown Los Angeles Community Plan Update*, <https://planning.lacity.org/plans-policies/community-plan-update/downtown-los-angeles-community-plan-update>, accessed January 10, 2023.

**Table III-1
Related Projects^a**

No.	Project	Description	Size
1.	Mitsui Fudosan (Eighth and Figueroa Tower) 744 S. Figueroa St.	Apartment	438 du
		Restaurant	3,750 sf
		Retail	3,750 sf
2.	945 West 8th Street 945 W. 8th St.	Apartment	781 du
		Commercial	6,700 sf
3.	8th/Grand/Hope Project 754 S. Hope St.	Condominium	580 du
		Retail	7,329 sf
4.	Embassy Tower 848 S. Grand Ave.	Condominium	420 du
		Retail	38,500 sf
5.	Mixed-Use 840 S. Olive St.	Condominium	303 du
		Restaurant	9,680 sf
6.	845 Olive & 842 Grand Mixed-Use 845 S. Olive St.	Apartment	208 du
		Retail	2,430 sf
7.	1018 West Ingraham Street 1018 W. Ingraham St.	Apartment	43 du
		Retail	7,400 sf
8.	949 South Hope Street Mixed-Use Development 949 S. Hope St.	Apartment	236 du
		Retail	5,954 sf
9.	Metropolis Mixed-Use 899 S. Francisco St.	Condominium	836 du
		Hotel	480 rm
		Office	988,225 sf
		Retail	46,000 sf
10.	Hotel & Apartments 675 S. Bixel St.	Apartment	422 du
		Hotel	126 rm
		Retail	4,874 sf
11.	Alexan South Broadway 850 S. Hill St.	Apartment	305 du
		Retail	3,500 sf
		Restaurant	3,500 sf
12.	Olympic Tower 813 W. Olympic Blvd.	Condominium	374 du
		Hotel	373 rm
		Office	33,498 sf
		Retail	65,074 sf
		Conference Center	10,801 sf
13.	Downtown LA 926 James M. Wood Blvd.	Hotel	247 rm
14.	Hill Street Mixed-Use 920 S. Hill St.	Apartment	239 du
		Retail	5,400 sf

**Table III-1 (Continued)
Related Projects**

No.	Project	Description	Size
15.	5th & Hill 323 W. 5th St.	Hotel	190 rm
		Meeting Room	6,100 sf
		Apartment	31 du
		Restaurant	29,200 sf
16.	Mixed-Use 1150 W. Wilshire Blvd.	Condominium	140 du
		Commercial	9,115 sf
17.	Spring St Hotel 633 S. Spring St.	Hotel	176 rm
		Bar	5,290 sf
		Restaurant	8,430 sf
18.	Mixed-Use 1145 W. 7th St.	Condominium	241 du
		Retail	7,291 sf
19.	Sapphire Mixed-Use (Revised) 1111 W. 6th St.	Apartment	362 du
		Retail	25,805 sf
20.	940 South Hill Mixed-Use 940 S. Hill St.	Apartment	232 du
		Retail	14,000 sf
21.	Restaurant 1036 S. Grand Ave.	Restaurant	7,149 sf
22.	Broadway Mixed-Use 955 S. Broadway	Apartment	163 du
		Retail	6,406 sf
23.	Apartments 1218 W. Ingraham St.	Apartment	80 du
24.	Fig Central 1101 S. Flower St.	Condominium	504 du
		Hotel	183 rm
		Retail	166,000 sf
25.	Olympia Mixed-Use 1001 Olympic Blvd.	Apartment	879 du
		Hotel	1,000 rm
		Retail	20,000 sf
		Restaurant	20,000 sf
26.	Angels Landing Mixed-Use 332 S. Olive St.	Residential	432 du
		Hotel	515 rm
		Commercial	72,090 sf
27.	Mixed-Use 601 S. Main St.	Apartment	452 du
		Retail	25,000 sf
28.	1045 South Olive Street 1045 S. Olive St.	Condominium	800 du
		Retail	15,000 sf
29.	Olympic & Hill Mixed Use 1030 S. Hill St.	Apartment	700 du
		Retail	7,000 sf
		Restaurant	7,000 sf

**Table III-1 (Continued)
Related Projects**

No.	Project	Description	Size
30.	Equity Residential Mixed-Use 340 S. Hill St.	Apartment	406 du
		Affordable	22 du
		Office	2,980 sf
		Retail	2,630 sf
31.	Mixed-Use (Lifan Tower) 1235 W. 7th St.	Apartment	303 du
		Retail	5,960 sf
32.	Mixed-Use 400 S. Broadway	Apartment	450 du
		Retail	6,904 sf
		Bar	5,000 sf
33.	Residential 1322 W. Maryland St.	Apartment	62 du
34.	Amacon Project 1133 S. Hope St.	Condominium	208 du
		Retail	5,029 sf
35.	Condominiums 742 S. Hartford Ave.	Condominium	42 du
36.	Apartments 740 S. Hartford Ave.	Apartment	80 du
37.	Mixed-Use 755 S. Los Angeles St.	Office	60,243 sf
		Retail	16,694 sf
		Restaurant	26,959 sf
38.	11th & Hill Project 1115 S. Hill St.	Condominium	172 du
		Restaurant	6,850 sf
39.	Hotel/Restaurant 1099 S. Grand Ave.	Hotel	160 rm
		Ground-Floor Restaurant	3,063 sf
40.	Hotel/Retail 1130 S. Hope St.	Hotel	144 rm
		Retail	378 sf
41.	Ethos Societe 806 S. Garland Ave.	Apartment	120 du
		Office	33,703 sf
		Day Care Center	10,049 sf
		Retail	6,906 sf
42.	Variety Arts (Mixed-Use) 940 S. Figueroa St.	Restaurant	10,056 sf
		Bar	5,119 sf
		Office	3,295 sf
43.	Residential 350 S. Figueroa St.	Apartment	570 du

**Table III-1 (Continued)
Related Projects**

No.	Project	Description	Size
44.	Mack Urban (Site 2 & 3) 1105 S. Olive St.	Site 2: Apartment	537 du
		Site 2: Restaurant	3,800 sf
		Site 2: Retail	3,800 sf
		Site 3: Apartment	713 du
		Site 3: Restaurant	7,100 sf
		Site 3: Retail	7,100 sf

du = dwelling units

rm = rooms

sf = square feet

^a *Related project information provided by LADOT, Department of City Planning, and recent traffic studies prepared in the area. Related projects within a 0.5-mile radius of the Project Site.*

Source: Gibson Transportation Consulting, Inc., 2022.



LEGEND

- Project Site
- # Related Project
- Metro Regional Connector Transit Project



Figure III-1
Related Project Location Map