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August 26, 2022

NOTICE OF EXTENSION OF PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT PERIOD

TO: Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, Stakeholders, and Interested Parties

FROM: City of Los Angeles
Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering
Environmental Management Group
1149 South Broadway, Los Angeles, CA 90015

SUBJECT: Extended Comment Period for the Notice of Availability of the Focused Recirculated Environmental Impact Report for the proposed Los Angeles Zoo Vision Plan; State Clearinghouse Number (SCH#) 2019011053

The City of Los Angeles (City) Public Works Department, Bureau of Engineering (BOE) has prepared a Focused Recirculated Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens (Zoo) Vision Plan (Project) consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Focused sections of the EIR have been revised to address a new project alternative that has been prepared in response to public comments received by the City. As the CEQA Lead Agency, BOE has prepared this Focused Recirculated EIR in accordance with CEQA (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.); the Guidelines for the Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA Guidelines) (California Code of Regulations Sections 15000 et seq.); and the City's environmental guidance documents (i.e., Los Angeles City CEQA Guidelines and L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide: Your Resource for Preparing CEQA Analyses in Los Angeles).

The purpose of this notice is to extend the public comment period to receive comments on the Focused Recirculated EIR and to announce that a second virtual meeting will be held. A Notice of Availability for the Focused Recirculated EIR for the Project was previously distributed to the public on July 14, 2022, which started a 45-day public review and comment period. The original comment period was scheduled to close on August 29, 2022. This notice is to announce that the public comment period has been extended to **Friday, September 23, 2022 at 5:00 PM** to allow the public a total of 72 days to review the Focused Recirculated EIR and submit comments. A second virtual public meeting will be held on **September 12, 2022 at 6:00 PM**. The link to the public meeting will be posted here: <https://eng.lacity.org/los-angeles-zoo-vision-plan>.

No other revisions have been made to the Focused Recirculated EIR. This notice provides information on the above Project. If you have already submitted comments on the Focused Recirculated EIR, you do not need to resubmit comments.

Since the revisions are limited to specific sections of the EIR to address the new project alternative, only those portions of the EIR are included in the Focused Recirculated EIR. Pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(f)(2), the City requests that reviewers limit their comments to the revised sections that are included in this Focused Recirculated EIR as the City need only respond to comments on the sections of the EIR that are

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being recirculated. The recirculated sections upon which comments will be accepted include Section 1.0, *Introduction*, Section 4.0, *Alternatives*, Appendix O, Appendix P, and Appendix Q. All comments received during this period will be responded to in writing in a revised Section 8.0, *Response to Comments* and will be addressed as needed in those sections of the Focused Recirculated EIR that has been recirculated for public review.

PROJECT EIR BACKGROUND: In June 2021, the City published the Final EIR and Appendices. The Board of Zoo Commissioners reviewed and considered the Final EIR and proposed Project at their meeting on June 15, 2021. The City Council has not yet reviewed or considered the Final EIR and proposed Project for adoption and certification.

PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING: The proposed Project site lies in the northeastern portion of Griffith Park at the base of the eastern foothills of the Santa Monica Mountains in the City. Griffith Park is bordered by the cities of Burbank and Glendale to the northwest and northeast, respectively, as well as communities within the City, including Los Feliz, Hollywood Hills, and Cahuenga Park to the southwest. The Project site encompasses the entire existing 133-acre Zoo, located at 5333 Zoo Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90027. The Zoo is roughly bounded by the Golden State Freeway or Interstate 5 (I-5) to the east and the Ventura Freeway or California State Route 134 (SR-134) to the north. The Los Angeles River also forms the north and east boundaries of Griffith Park before continuing south and eventually flowing into the Pacific Ocean at Long Beach. Regional vehicular access to the Zoo is provided via I-5, located approximately 0.2 miles east of the Zoo entrance, as well as SR-134, which is located approximately 0.35 miles north of the northern boundary of the Zoo. Local access to the Zoo entrance within Griffith Park is provided by Zoo Drive from the north and west and via Western Heritage Way and Crystal Springs Drive from the south.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The proposed Project would guide future development and modernization of the Zoo for the next 20 years. The proposed Project would include comprehensive redesign and redevelopment of the Zoo to replace outdated buildings and infrastructure and upgrade animal care and guest amenities throughout the 133-acre Zoo. Improvements would include new and revitalized immersive exhibit space and animal habitats, new visitor-serving buildings, expanded and modernized administrative and maintenance service facilities, circulation improvements for access roads, pedestrian walkways and paths, an enhanced entry way and plaza, and new parking facilities. The proposed Project is projected to increase annual visitation by approximately 1.2 million visitors per year. This projected growth in visitation and expansion of facilities within the Zoo property would have commensurate increases in employment.

PURPOSE OF THE FOCUSED RECIRCULATED EIR: Following publication of the Final EIR in June 2021, the City continued to receive comments regarding the proposed Project's impacts related to biological resources, transportation, and aesthetics. In response to these comments, a new project alternative, Alternative 1.5, the California Focused Conservation Alternative, was created and has been analyzed in this Focused Recirculated EIR in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5.

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE FOCUSED RECIRCULATED EIR: The CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5 require that a lead agency recirculate an EIR when "significant new information" is added to the EIR after public notice is given of the availability of the draft EIR for public review but before certification. The CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(a) defines "significant new information" as (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 that reduce the impact to a level of insignificance; (3) A feasible project alternative or mitigation measure considerably different from the others previously analyzed would clearly lessen the significant environmental impacts of the project, but the project's proponents decline to adopt it; or (4) The Draft EIR was so fundamentally and basically inadequate and conclusory in nature that meaningful public review and comment were precluded.

To respond to public comments and questions received after publication of the Final EIR, the City has elected to revise and recirculate sections of the EIR related to the alternatives analysis and supporting technical memoranda. The Focused Recirculated EIR has been prepared consistent with the standards provided in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5, which set forth the conditions governing the recirculation of an EIR prior to certification. The Focused Recirculated EIR includes only those sections of the EIR that have been revised to address the new project alternative. Consistent with the standards provided in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(g), the specific sections of the Final EIR that have been revised and are included in the Focused

Recirculated EIR include:

- Section 1.0, *Introduction* – This section has been modified to describe the Focused Recirculated EIR process and related CEQA requirements.
- Section 4.0, *Alternatives* – This section has been expanded to describe and analyze a new project alternative– Alternative 1.5, the California Focused Conservation Alternative. When compared to the proposed Project and among alternatives, the California Focused Conservation Alternative has been identified as the Environmentally Superior Alternative due to its reduction in impacts related to aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, energy, urban forestry resources, greenhouse gas emissions, noise, transportation, and utilities. Alternative 1.5 would also achieve more of the Project objectives when compared to Alternatives 1 and 2. In addition, a new discussion has been added that provides an analysis of the space dedicated to animal welfare and care under the proposed Project and alternatives.
- Appendix O, *Alternative 1.5 Project Description* – This new appendix contains a detailed description of the new California Focused Conservation Alternative. A copy of the planning document 2022 Vision Plan – Alternative 1.5 is also included.
- Appendix P – *Parking Analysis for Alternative 1.5* - is a new appendix to the Final EIR that provides a summary of analysis of parking demand under the new Alternative 1.5 and informs recommendations for development of a Peak Visitation Management Program, a key component of Alternative 1.5.
- Appendix Q, *Animal Welfare Area Assessment* – Provides a comparative analysis of the area that would be dedicated to animal welfare under implementation of the proposed Project and project alternatives.

The numbering of sections in this Focused Recirculated EIR matches that in the previously published Final EIR. Section 1.0 and Section 4.0 replace in their entirety the corresponding sections of the original Final EIR.

WHERE TO VIEW THE FOCUSED RECIRCULATED EIR: Due to the ongoing public health crisis associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the environmental review process will be conducted online. The Focused Recirculated EIR has been made available for review online at: <https://eng.lacity.org/los-angeles-zoo-vision-plan>.

EXTENDED PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD: The Focused Recirculated EIR will be circulated for a 72-day public review period, beginning on **July 14, 2022** and ending on **September 23, 2022**.

A second virtual public meeting will be held on September 12, 2022 at 6:00 PM. The link to the public meeting will be posted here: <https://eng.lacity.org/los-angeles-zoo-vision-plan>.

COMMENTS ON THE FOCUSED RECIRCULATED EIR: All comments must be submitted no later than **5:00 PM on September 23, 2022** by mailing or emailing (please include “**LA Zoo Vision Plan Focused Recirculated EIR Comments**” in the subject line) to:

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