

1. INTRODUCTION

This Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA) has been prepared pursuant to Section 21155.2 of the California Public Resources Code.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

The subject of this Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA) is the proposed Weingart Projects (Project), which include development of two distinct affordable housing projects for permanent long-term housing with supportive services designed to enable homeless persons and individuals/families at risk of homelessness to ensure that they remain housed and live as independently as possible. The two Project Sites are located in Downtown Los Angeles, within the Central City Community Plan Area, in the City of Los Angeles (City). A summary of the location of the Project Sites and a description of the Project is included below.

Site 1 Project

Site 1 Location: 554-562 South San Pedro Street and 555-561 South Crocker Street

Site 1 Project Summary: Site 1 development generally includes the demolition and removal of an existing 7,000-square-foot food service building and surface parking area and construction of 222,574 square feet of mixed residential, philanthropic institution, and commercial land uses in two towers (Tower 1A and Tower 1B) and one level of subterranean parking garage with 32 parking spaces (27,300 square feet). The Site 1 Project would include a total of 382 residential dwelling units (194,831 square feet); a total of 25,493 square feet to be used for philanthropic institution land uses; 2,250 square feet to be used for commercial land uses; and approximately 26,060 square feet of common indoor and outdoor open space. Of the 382 residential dwelling units, 378 units would be set aside as Restricted Affordable Units with the remaining four units designated as Manager Units. Vehicular access to Site 1 would be provided via a single driveway on Crocker Street. In addition, the southern paseo would permit limited vehicular access from Crocker Street from an existing curb cut (not out to South San Pedro Street but in and out of Site 1, only). Limited vehicular access would be required per an existing easement to provide loading and unloading opportunities to the abutting Weingart Center Association building and the building located at the northwest corner of Crocker Street and 6th Street.

To allow for the proposed development of Site 1, the Project Applicant is requesting the following discretionary approvals:

- Pursuant to Los Angeles City Charter Section 555 and Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) Section 11.5.6, a General Plan Amendment to the Central City Community Plan to amend the land use designation of Site 1 from Light Manufacturing to Regional Center Commercial and to amend Footnote No. 3 of the Community Plan to permit development on Site 1 to exceed the 6:1 floor area limitations;

- Pursuant to LAMC Section 12.32 F, a Zone and Height District Change from M2-2D to C2-4D and pursuant to LAMC Section 11.5.11(e) and California Government Code 65915(k) the following three Developer Incentives to permit:
 - 35 percent increase in FAR for a maximum 8.1:1 FAR, or 223,615 square feet, in lieu of the Development “D” Limitation of 6:1 FAR, or 165,641 square feet;
 - 26,060 square feet of open space and 48 trees (a 33 percent reduction in required open space and a 50 percent reduction in the number of required trees) in lieu of the 38,200 square feet of open space and 96 trees required pursuant to LAMC Section 12.21 G, and to permit up to 76 percent of the open space to be provided as interior common area (47 percent or 12,285 square feet) and covered outdoor areas (28 percent or 7,305 square feet) in lieu of LAMC Section 12.21 G’s maximum 25 percent interior common open space limitation and its requirement that all open spaces be open to the sky ;
 - No parking spaces to be required for dwelling units set aside for households earning less than 50 percent of the Area Medium Income as determined by the Housing and Community Investment Department in lieu of the parking required pursuant to 12.21 A,4
- Pursuant to LAMC Section 16.05, Site Plan Review, for a project which proposes more than 50 residential dwelling units; and
- Pursuant to LAMC Sections 17.01 and 17.15, approval of Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 74852, to allow the merger and re-subdivision of land for a phased tract map to permit one master ground lot and three air space lots, a haul route, and a modification of the dedication requirements along Crocker Street.

Site 2 Project

Site 2 Location: 600-628 South San Pedro Street, 611-615 South Crocker Street, and 518-522 East 6th Street

Site 2 Project Summary: Site 2 development generally includes the demolition and removal of an existing surface parking lot and development of the site with 164,875 square feet of mixed-use residential and commercial land uses in two buildings (Building 1 and Building 2). The Site 2 Project would include a total of 303 residential dwelling units (298 Very-Low-Income affordable units and 5 manager units, approximately 148,705 square feet); 3,200 square feet to be used for commercial land uses; 17,100 square feet to be used for office land uses; 33,000 square feet of open space; and 79,752 square feet to be used for parking land uses, providing 212 vehicle parking spaces. A 13,815-square-foot outdoor courtyard/urban park would separate the two buildings and provide pedestrian access to Site 2 from South San Pedro Street and Crocker Street. Vehicular access to Site 2 would be provided via a single driveway on San Pedro Street.

To allow for the proposed development of Site 2, the Project Applicant is requesting the following discretionary approvals:

- Pursuant to Los Angeles City Charter Section 555 and LAMC Section 11.5.6, a General Plan Amendment to the Central City Community Plan to amend the land use designation of Site 2 from Light Manufacturing to Regional Center Commercial;
- Pursuant to LAMC Section 12.32 F, a Zone and Height District Change from M2-2D to C2-4D and pursuant to LAMC Section 11.5.11(e) and California Government Code 65915(k) the following two Developer Incentives to permit:
 - 27 percent (9,145 square feet) of the common open space be provided in interior common areas, 30percent (or 10,040 square feet) of the provided open space to be covered by a structure or trellis and 38 trees, in lieu of LAMC Section 12.21 G that limits the interior common areas to 25 percent of required (or 7,574 square feet), mandates all exterior areas to be open to the sky and requires 96 trees. The Project provides 33,000 square feet of open space, or one percent (2,700 square feet) more than required (30,300 square feet) by the LAMC;
 - no parking spaces shall be required for dwelling units set aside for households that earn less than 50 percent of the Area Medium Income as determined by the Housing and Community Investment Department;
- Pursuant to LAMC Section 16.05, Site Plan Review for a project which proposes more than 50 residential dwelling units; and
- Pursuant to LAMC Sections 17.01 and 17.15, approval of Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 74864to permit the merger and re-subdivision of the land and creation of one ground lot and four airspace lots

Lead Agency: City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning
200 North Spring Street, Room 621
Los Angeles, CA 90012

City Staff Contact: May Sirinopwongsagon, City Planner
213-978-1372

Project Applicant: Weingart Center Association
566 S. San Pedro Street
Los Angeles, CA 90013

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SENATE BILL 375 AND THE SCEA

The State of California adopted Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), also known as “The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008,” which outlines growth strategies that better integrate regional land use and transportation planning and that help meet the State of California’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction mandates. SB 375 requires the State’s 18 metropolitan planning organizations to incorporate a “sustainable communities strategy” (SCS) into the regional transportation plans to achieve their respective region’s greenhouse gas emission reduction targets set by CARB. Correspondingly, SB 375 provides various CEQA streamlining provisions for projects that are consistent with an adopted applicable SCS and meet certain objective criteria; one such CEQA streamlining tool is the SCEA.

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is the metropolitan planning organization for the County of Los Angeles (along with the Counties of Imperial, San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange, and Ventura). On April 7, 2016, SCAG’s Regional Council adopted the 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2016-2040 RTP/SCS). For the SCAG region, CARB has set GHG emissions reduction targets at eight percent below 2005 per capita emissions levels by 2020, and 13 percent below 2005 per capita emissions levels by 2035. The 2016-2040 RTP/SCS outlines strategies to meet or exceed the targets set by CARB.¹ By Executive Order, approved June 28, 2016, CARB officially determined that the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS would achieve CARB’s 2020 and 2035 GHG emission reduction targets. (Refer to attached 6/28/2016 CARB Executive Order in Appendix A.)

SB 375 allows the City, acting as lead agency, to prepare a SCEA as the environmental CEQA Clearance for “transit priority projects” (as described below) that are consistent with SCAG’s 2016-2040 RTP/SCS.

TRANSIT PRIORITY PROJECT CRITERIA

SB 375 provides CEQA streamlining benefits to qualifying transit priority projects (TPPs). For purposes of projects in the SCAG region, a qualifying TPP is a project that meets the following four criteria (see Public Resources Code §21155 (a) and (b)):

1. Is consistent with the general use designation, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the project area in the SCAG 2016-2040 RTP/SCS;
2. Contains at least 50 percent residential use, based on total building square footage and, if the project contains between 26 percent and 50 percent nonresidential uses, a floor area ratio of not less than 0.75;
3. Provides a minimum net density of at least 20 units per acre; and

¹ *Southern California Association of Governments, 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, Introduction, April 7, 2016. <http://scagrtpscsc.net/Pages/FINAL2016RTPSCS.aspx>*

4. Is within one-half mile of a major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor included in a regional transportation plan.

SCEA PROCESS AND STREAMLINING PROVISIONS

Qualifying TPPs that have incorporated all feasible mitigation measures and performance standards or criteria set forth in the prior applicable EIR (SCAG's 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Program EIR) and that are determined to not result in significant and unavoidable environmental impacts may be approved with a SCEA. The specific substantive and procedural requirements for the approval of a SCEA include the following:

1. An initial study shall be prepared for a SCEA to identify all significant impacts or potentially significant impacts, except for the following:
 - a. Growth-inducing impacts, and
 - b. Project-specific or cumulative impacts from cars and light trucks on global warming or the regional transportation network.²

Note: All relevant and applicable 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Program EIR mitigation measures shall be incorporated into the Project prior to conducting the initial study analysis.

2. The initial study shall identify any cumulative impacts that have been adequately addressed and mitigated in a prior applicable certified EIR. Where the lead agency determines the impact has been adequately addressed and mitigated, the impact shall not be cumulatively considerable.
3. The SCEA shall contain mitigation measures that either avoid or mitigate to a level of insignificance all potentially significant or significant effects of the project required to be identified in the initial study.
4. A draft of the SCEA shall be circulated for a public comment period not less than 30 days, and the lead agency shall consider all comments received prior to acting on the SCEA.
5. The SCEA may be approved by the lead agency after the lead agency's legislative body conducts a public hearing, reviews comments received, and finds the following:

² "Regional transportation network" means all existing and proposed transportation system improvements, including the state transportation system, that were included in the transportation and air quality conformity modeling, including congestion modeling, for the final regional transportation plan adopted by the metropolitan planning organization, but shall not include local streets and roads. Nothing in the foregoing relieves any project from a requirement to comply with any conditions, exactions, or fees for the mitigation of the project's impacts on the structure, safety, or operations of the regional transportation network or local streets and roads.

- a. All potentially significant or significant effects required to be identified in the initial study have been identified and analyzed, and
 - b. With respect to each significant effect on the environment required to be identified in the initial study, either of the following apply:
 - i. Changes or alternations have been required in or incorporated into the project that avoid or mitigate the significant effects to a level of insignificance.
 - ii. Those changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and have been, or can and should be, adopted by that other agency.
6. The lead agency's decision to review and approve a TPP with a SCEA shall be reviewed under the substantial evidence standard.

REQUIRED FINDINGS

Based on the information contained in Section 2 (Project Description), Section 3 (SCEA Criteria and Transit Priority Project Consistency Analysis), Section 4 (2016-2040 RTP/SCS Project EIR Mitigation Measures), Section 5 (Initial Study Checklist), and Section 6 (Sustainable Communities Environmental Impact Analysis) of this document, the City finds that preparation of a SCEA in accordance with Public Resources Code Section 21155.2(b) is appropriate for the Project for the following reasons:

- The Project is consistent with the general use designations, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the area of the Project Sites in the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS) prepared by SCAG, which is the metropolitan planning organization for the City.
- The State Air Resources Board, pursuant to subparagraph (H) of paragraph (2) of subdivision (b) of Section 65080 of the Government Code, has accepted SCAG's determination that the sustainable communities strategy adopted by SCAG in the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS would, if implemented, achieve the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.
- The Project qualifies as a transit priority project pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21155 in that the Project contains more than 50 percent residential use; provides a minimum net density greater than 20 units an acre; and is within one-half mile of a major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor included in a regional transportation plan;
- The Project is a residential or mixed-use project as defined by Public Resources Code Section 21159.28(d);
- The Project incorporates all feasible mitigation measures, performance standards, or criteria set forth in the prior environmental reports and adopted findings made pursuant to Public Resources

Code Section 21081, including the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Program Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR);

- All potentially significant or significant effects required to be identified and analyzed pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in an initial study have been identified and analyzed in an initial study; and
- As outlined in detail in Section 5 (Initial Study Checklist) and Section 6 (Sustainable Communities Environmental Impact Analysis) changes or alterations have been required in or incorporated into the Project that avoid or mitigate the significant effects to a level of less than significant.

ORGANIZATION OF THE SCEA

Based on the information presented above, the SCEA for the Project is organized as follows:

Section 1. Introduction: This section provides introductory information about the Project and background information regarding SB 375, lists the TPP criteria, and describes the required content of the SCEA.

Section 2. Project Description: This section provides a detailed description of the environmental setting and the Project, including Project characteristics and environmental setting.

Section 3. SCEA Criteria and Transit Priority Project Consistency: This section includes a discussion of the Project's consistency with the TPP criteria listed above and demonstrates that the Project satisfies all necessary criteria for approval of a SCEA as set forth in California Public Resources Code Sections 21155 and 21155.2.

Section 4. 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Program EIR Mitigation Measures: This section identifies all of the mitigation measures contained in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) for SCAG's 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Program EIR and a discussion of the applicability of the mitigation measures to the Project.

Section 5. Initial Study Checklist: This section contains the completed Initial Study Checklist and assesses the significant level under each environmental impact category.

Section 6. Sustainable Communities Environmental Impact Analysis: Each environmental issue identified in the Initial Study Checklist contains an assessment and discussion of Project-specific and cumulative impacts associated with each subject area. Where the evaluation identifies potentially significant effects, as identified on the Checklist, mitigation measures are provided to reduce such impacts to less-than-significant levels.

Section 7. Preparers of the SCEA: This section identifies the parties involved in preparation of the SCEA.

Appendices: Includes various documents, technical reports, and information used in preparation of the SCEA and can be found in the case file for ENV-2017-615-SCEA at the Department of City Planning.