

Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment

I. Introduction

The subject of this Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA) is the proposed Thatcher Yard Project (the “Project”), a development of 98 residential apartment units, 68 of which will be reserved for seniors and 30 units that will accommodate families, located at 3233, 3311, 3321, South Thatcher Avenue (the “Project Site”) in the Venice community of the City of Los Angeles (the “City”). The Project is discussed in further detail in Section II, Project Description. The Project Site is located within the adopted Venice Community Plan Area of the City of Los Angeles. The City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning is the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”). This SCEA has been prepared pursuant to Section 21155.2 of the Public Resources Code.

Project Information

Project Title: Thatcher Yard

Project Applicant: Thatcher Yard Housing, LP

Project Location: 3233, 3311, 3321, South Thatcher Avenue, Los Angeles 90292

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

Senate Bill 375 and the SCEA

Senate Bill 375 (“SB 375”), also known as “The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008,” 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 (MPO) 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 the California Air Resources Board (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 MPO 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. 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.

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
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.

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:
 - 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 alterations 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 a review of the entire administrative record, the City of Los Angeles has determined that the Project qualifies for a SCEA, based on the following criteria:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the general use designations, density, building intensity, and applicable policies specified for the project area in the RTP/SCS prepared by SCAG;
2. 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;
3. The proposed project qualifies as a transit priority project pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21155(b);
4. The proposed project is a residential or mixed-use project as defined by Public Resources Code Section 21159.28(d);
5. The proposed project as mitigated incorporates all relevant and feasible mitigation measures, performance standards, or criteria set forth in the prior environmental reports, including the RTP/SCS Program Environmental Impact Report;
6. All potentially significant or significant effects required to be identified and analyzed pursuant to the CEQA have been identified and analyzed in an initial study; and
7. The proposed project, as mitigated, either avoids or mitigates to a level of insignificance all potentially significant or significant effects of the proposed project required to be analyzed pursuant to CEQA.

Therefore, the City of Los Angeles finds that the proposed project complies with the requirements of CEQA for using an SCEA as authorized pursuant to Public Resource Code Section 21155.2(b).

Organization of the SCEA

This document is organized into five sections as follows:

I. Introduction: This Section (above) provides introductory information such as the Project title, the Project Applicant, and the designated Lead Agency for the Project.

II. Project Description: This Section provides a detailed description of the Project including the environmental setting, Project characteristics, related project information, Project objectives, and environmental clearance requirements.

III. SCEA Criteria and Transit Priority Project Consistency Analysis: This section identifies the Transit Priority Project Criteria and provides an analysis of the Project's consistency with the SCAG RTP/SCS.

IV. 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Program EIR Mitigation Measures: This section identifies all feasible mitigation measures, performance standards, and criteria from the 2016-2040 RTP/SCS Program EIR.

V. SCEA Initial Study Checklist: This section contains the completed City of Los Angeles SCEA Initial Study Checklist followed by an assessment and discussion of impacts associated with each subject area. When the evaluation identifies potentially significant effects, as identified in the SCEA Initial Study Checklist, mitigation measures are provided to reduce such impacts to less than significant levels.

Appendices: Includes various documents, technical reports, and information used in the SCEA.