

1 Introduction to the Final Environmental Impact Report

1.1 Introduction

This Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared by the City of Montclair (City) to assess the potentially significant environmental effects of the proposed Montclair Place District Specific Plan (MPDSP, or Proposed Project). The City is the lead agency for the Proposed Project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

As described in the Draft EIR, the proposed MPDSP would assign and create land use zones for parcels within the approximately 104.35-acre site (Plan area) located in downtown Montclair, just north of the Interstate 10 freeway and just south of the City's North Montclair Downtown Specific Plan Area. The MPDSP would provide development standards and architectural guidelines to guide development in the Plan area through 2040. The majority of the Plan area (approximately 75 acres) is currently occupied by the existing Montclair Place Mall properties. A key feature of the MPDSP would provide for the demolition of all or a portion of the existing Mall, some or all appurtenant free-standing outbuildings, and portions of the existing surface parking lots, to construct a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use downtown district, with structured parking facilities through a series of planned phases. The maximum number of dwelling units for the Plan area envisioned under the MPDSP is 6,621 dwelling units (or approximately 5 million square feet of residential uses), and the total additional commercial square footage envisioned under the MPDSP is approximately 512,000 square feet. Additionally, the MPDSP includes provisions for the construction of a hotel with approximately 100 to 200 rooms. The MPDSP would replace the existing C-3 zoning of the North Montclair Specific Plan for the Plan area with new mixed-use zones, thereby enabling the future development of commercial, office, multi-family residential, hotel, and mixed-use projects within walking and biking distance of the nearby Montclair Transcenter.

This EIR may be utilized by the City and any other governmental entities, as responsible agencies, for approvals needed in connection with the Proposed Project, whether or not such agencies or specific approvals are listed below.

The required discretionary approvals sought by the City consist of the following:

- A General Plan Amendment to reflect the new land uses permitted within the MPDSP area. This area would be re-designated in the General Plan from Regional Commercial to Planned Development.
- A zone change in the official City of Montclair Zoning Map and other exhibits to reflect the new zoning for the MPDSP.
- In addition, the Proposed Project would require a Specific Plan Amendment to remove the Plan area from boundaries of the North Montclair Specific Plan.
- Approval of the MPDSP.

Other regulatory agencies that may also require permits or other approvals for the Proposed Project include:

- Airport Land Use Commission review for Cable Airport and Ontario International Airport
- Native American Heritage Commission and affiliated Tribes for the Assembly Bill 52 consultation process

- California Native American tribes for the Senate Bill 18 consultation process
- Monte Vista Water District approval for the Water Supply Assessment

As described in the CEQA Guidelines, public agencies are charged with the duty to avoid or substantially lessen significant environmental effects, with consideration of other conditions, including economic, social, technological, legal, and other benefits. As required by CEQA, this Final EIR assesses the significant direct and indirect environmental effects of the Proposed Project, as well as the significant cumulative impacts that could occur from implementation of the Proposed Project. This Final EIR is an informational document only, the purpose of which is to identify the significant effects of the Proposed Project on the environment; to indicate how those significant effects could be avoided or significantly lessened, including feasible mitigation measures; to identify any significant and unavoidable adverse impacts that cannot be mitigated to less than significant; and to identify reasonable and feasible alternatives to the Proposed Project that would avoid or substantially lessen any significant adverse environmental effects associated with the Proposed Project and achieve the fundamental objectives of the Proposed Project.

Before approving a project, CEQA requires the lead agency to prepare and certify a Final EIR. The contents of a Final EIR are specified in Section 15132 of the CEQA Guidelines, as follows:

The Final EIR shall consist of:

- (a) The Draft EIR or a revision of the Draft
- (b) Comments and recommendations received on the Draft EIR either verbatim or in summary.
- (c) A list of persons, organizations, and public agencies commenting on the Draft EIR
- (d) The responses of the lead agency to significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process
- (e) Any other information added by the lead agency

The responses to comments (Chapter 2, Responses to Comments, of this Final EIR) include copies of all the comments received during the Draft EIR public review period, as described further below, as well as responses to all comments received. The lead agency must provide each agency that commented on the Draft EIR with a copy of the lead agency's proposed response at least 10 days before certifying the Final EIR.

In addition to these responses to comments, the Final EIR contains clarifications, corrections, or minor revisions to the text, tables, figures, and appendices of the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR has not been modified to reflect these clarifications, except as shown in Chapter 3, Changes to the Draft Environmental Impact Report, of this Final EIR. The Final EIR will be used by the City of Montclair City Council in the decision-making process for the Proposed Project.

1.2 Contents and Organization of Final Environmental Impact Report

The Final EIR, in compliance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15132, is organized as follows:

Chapter 1, Introduction to Final Environmental Impact Report. This chapter provides general information on, and the procedural compliance of, the Proposed Project and the Final EIR.

Chapter 2, Responses to Comments. This chapter includes a list of those who provided comments on the Draft EIR during the public review period. This chapter also includes the comments received on environmental issues raised during the public review process for the Draft EIR and the City’s responses to these comments. Each comment is assigned a comment number that corresponds to a response number and response.

Chapter 3, Changes to the Draft Environmental Impact Report. This chapter contains a summary of changes made to the document since publication of the Draft EIR as a result of comments received. Revisions were made to clarify information presented in the Draft EIR; only minor technical changes or additions have been made. These changes and additions to the EIR do not raise important new issues related to significant effects on the environment, and are insignificant as the term is used in Section 15088.5(b) of the CEQA Guidelines. This chapter describes the changes that were made and presents the textual changes made since public review of the Draft EIR. Changes are signified by ~~strikeout~~ (i.e., ~~strikeout~~) where text was removed and by underline (i.e., underline) where text was added.

1.3 California Environmental Quality Act Review

Pursuant to Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) dated May 20, 2019, was circulated to 26 interested agencies, organizations, and individuals. The NOP was also sent to the State Clearinghouse at the California Governor’s Office of Planning and Research. The State Clearinghouse assigned a state identification number (SCH No. 2019050011) to this EIR. The City also sent the NOP to property owners within a 300-foot buffer of the Plan area and to entities or individuals who own property within the Plan area. Recipients of the NOP were requested to provide responses within 30 days after their receipt. Hardcopies of the Initial Study (IS)/NOP were made available for review at the Montclair Branch Library and at the City’s Community Development Department office. An electronic copy of the IS/NOP was also made available on the City’s website.

A public scoping meeting was held on May 28, 2019, at the City of Montclair City Council Chambers, to gather additional public input on the scope of the environmental document. The 30-day public scoping period ended on June 18, 2019. In response to the NOP, five comment letters were received during the IS/NOP public review period. Copies of the comment letters received are provided in Appendix A of the Draft EIR. The comment letters provide recommendations for preparing the air quality analysis in the EIR, recommendations for the circulation/transportation design for the Proposed Project, recommendations for sustainability practices that could be incorporated into the Proposed Project, instructions for complying with Assembly Bill 52 and Senate Bill 18 (tribal consultation processes), recommendations for cultural resources assessments, and recommendations for hazardous materials assessments. One comment letter also expressed concerns regarding potential impacts to Moreno Elementary School and Serrano Middle School, both in terms of enrollment and potential hazards that the Proposed Project may pose to the schools. These comments were considered during preparation of the Draft EIR. No CEQA-related comments were expressed at the scoping meeting.

A Notice of Availability of the Draft EIR was sent to agencies and interested parties on July 10, 2020, and the Draft EIR was circulated for a 45-day public review period from July 10, 2020 to August 25, 2020. The City received five comment letters during the Draft EIR public review period. A Planning Commission Meeting was held on August 10, 2020, as another opportunity to gather public comment on the Draft EIR. One public comment was received and responded to during the public hearing. The same commenter also provided written comment to the City. A list of the comments received, a transcript of the Planning Commission Meeting, copies of the comment letters received, and responses to comments are included in Chapter 2, Responses to Comments, of this Final EIR. Chapter 2 will also be mailed out to public agencies that commented on the Draft EIR, 10 days prior to the City of Montclair City Council meeting on the Proposed Project, per CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.

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