

Chapter 1. Introduction

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) evaluates the environmental effects which may result from the retention/reuse, partial demolition and/or complete demolition of the existing vacant Ambassador Hotel building and associated structures, as well as demolition of three adjacent multi-family residential structures and an adjacent, former, Budget Rent-A-Car office to accommodate the construction of the proposed Central Los Angeles Area New Learning Center No. 1. The proposed Central Los Angeles Area New Learning Center No. 1 is an LAUSD K-12 campus providing for 825 elementary school seats, 1,392 middle school seats, and 2,154 high school seat on the Ambassador Hotel site. The Ambassador Hotel site is located in an area bounded by Wilshire Boulevard, South Catalina Street, West 8th Street and South Mariposa Avenue in the City of Los Angeles. The proposed learning center site is approximately 1.5 miles north of the Santa Monica Freeway (I-10) and approximately 2.0 miles west of the Harbor Freeway (I-110). This Draft EIR has been prepared in conformance with State and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Guidelines for the implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

1.1 BACKGROUND, SCOPE AND CONTENT

As described in Section 15143 of the CEQA Guidelines:

The EIR shall focus on the significant effects on the environment. The significant effects should be discussed with emphasis in proportion to their severity and probability of occurrence. Effects dismissed in an Initial Study as clearly insignificant and unlikely to occur need not be discussed further in the EIR unless the Lead Agency subsequently receives information inconsistent with the finding in the Initial Study.

In compliance with CEQA, the LAUSD completed a multi-step process to determine the appropriate scope of issues to be examined in the Draft EIR. A Notice of Preparation (NOP) was circulated to responsible agencies and interested parties, including the State Clearinghouse, describing the proposed project and requesting comments between July 10 and August 8, 2002. A copy of the NOP and Initial Study (IS) prepared by the LAUSD and comments received on the NOP are included in Appendix A of this document. The following issues were identified in the Initial Study as having potentially significant impacts and will be addressed in the Draft EIR: aesthetics, air quality, cultural resources, noise, and transportation/traffic. LAUSD identified potential environmental impacts in the following areas, which also are addressed in this Draft EIR: biological resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology/water quality, land use, population and housing, and public services and utilities.

The following issues were determined by the Initial Study not to be significantly impacted by the project and are not addressed in the Draft EIR:

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- Agricultural Resources; and,
 - Mineral Resources.

A public scoping meeting was held on July 20, 2002, to seek public input regarding the environmental issues raised by the proposed project. Members of the public raised questions regarding the following potentially significant environmental impacts:

- Cultural Resources (historic issues associated with the Ambassador Hotel site);
- Noise (site is located in a residential area); and,
- Transportation/Traffic (site is located in a congested commercial/residential area).

1.2 PURPOSE AND LEGAL AUTHORITY

In accordance with *CEQA Section 15121(a)*, the purpose of an EIR is to serve as an informational document that will generally inform public agency decision makers and the public of the significant environmental effects of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project. *CEQA Section 15151* contains the following standards for EIR adequacy:

An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision makers with information which intelligently takes an account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in the light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR would summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The courts have looked not for perfection; but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure.

The Central Los Angeles Area New Learning Center No. 1 Draft EIR is an informational document for use by decision makers and the public in their review of the potential impacts of the proposed project, as well as in the evaluation of alternatives and mitigation measures which may minimize, avoid, or eliminate those impacts. As such, this document includes a full discussion of the project description, the existing environmental setting, environmental impacts, mitigation measures, any residual impacts that may exist after mitigation has been implemented, and project alternatives that could alleviate potential impacts.

To gain the most value from this report, certain key points recommended in the CEQA Guidelines should be kept in mind:

- This report should be used as a tool to give the reader an overview of the possible ramifications of the proposed project. It is designed to be an "early warning system" with regard to potential environmental impacts and subsequent effects on the local community's natural resources.

- A specific environmental impact is not necessarily irreversible or permanent. Incorporating changes recommended in this report during the design and construction phases of project development can wholly or partially mitigate most impacts, particularly in urban, more developed areas.

This report, while a summary of facts, reflects the professional judgment of the author. Therefore, the reader will have to individually weigh the facts it reports.

As the public agency with the authority to approve or deny the project, the LAUSD will consider the information in the Draft EIR along with other information before taking any action on the project. The conclusions of the Draft EIR regarding environmental impacts do not control the LAUSD's discretion to approve, deny or modify the project, but instead are presented as information intended to aid the decision-making process.

1.3 DRAFT EIR ORGANIZATION

As illustrated in Table 1-1 below, this Draft EIR is organized into eight chapters, each dealing with a separate aspect of the required content of an EIR as described in the CEQA Guidelines. To help the reader locate information of particular interest, a brief summary of the contents of each chapter of the Draft EIR is provided. The following sections are contained within the Draft EIR:

TABLE 1-1: REQUIRED DRAFT EIR CONTENTS

Requirement/CEQA Section	Location in Draft EIR
Table of contents (Section 15122)	Table of Contents
Summary (Section 15123)	Executive Summary
Project Description (Section 15124) and Environmental Setting (Section 15125)	Chapter 2
Significant environmental impacts (Section 15126.2)	Chapters 3A-3L
Unavoidable significant environmental impacts (Section 15126.2)	Chapter 5
Mitigation measures (Section 15126.4)	Chapters 3A-3L
Cumulative impacts (Section 15130)	Chapters 3A-3L
Alternatives to the proposed project (Section 15126.6)	Chapter 4
Growth-inducing impacts (Section 15126.2)	Chapter 5
Effects found not to be significant (Section 15128)	Chapter 5
Organizations and persons consulted (Section 15129)	Chapters 6 and 7
List of preparers (Section 15129)	Chapter 7

Executive Summary: This section contains an overview of the scope of the Draft EIR, as well as a summary of environmental impacts, proposed mitigation, level of significance after mitigation, and unavoidable impacts. Also contained within this section is a summary description of project alternatives.

Chapter 1. Introduction: This chapter provides an overview of the purpose and use of the Draft EIR, the scope of this Draft EIR, the environmental review process for the Draft EIR and the proposed project, and the general format of the document.

Chapter 2. Project Description and Site Characteristics: This chapter defines the project location, summarizes the proposed project, and outlines the project objectives and the need for the new learning center.

Chapter 3. Environmental Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures: This chapter describes and evaluates the environmental issue areas, including the existing environmental setting and background, applicable environmental thresholds, environmental impacts (both short-term and long-term), policy considerations related to the particular environmental issue area under analysis, mitigation measures capable of minimizing environmental harm, and a discussion of cumulative impacts. Where additional actions must be taken to ensure consistency with environmental policies, recommendations are made, as appropriate. By consolidating environmental impact assessment and site-specific policy directives within each impact area, clear linkages between impact assessment and related policy consistency can be established.

Chapter 4. Alternatives Analysis: This chapter analyzes alternatives to the proposed project, including the No Project Alternative, alternative uses for the proposed project site, a reduction in project scale, and alternate sites for the project.

Chapter 5. Other CEQA Considerations: This chapter provides a summary of the proposed project's potential growth-inducing impacts; provides a list of proposed project impacts that are significant and unavoidable by issue area; discusses the environmental effects of the proposed project found not to be significant; and, identifies any irreversible changes to the natural environment resulting from the proposed project.

Chapter 6. References: This chapter identifies all references used and cited in the preparation of this report.

Chapter 7. Report Preparation: This chapter identifies the public and private agencies and individuals contacted during the preparation of this report, and all individuals responsible for the preparation of this report.

Chapter 8. Acronyms and Abbreviations: This chapter provides a description of abbreviations and acronyms used throughout the document.

Appendices: Data supporting the analysis or contents of this Draft EIR are provided in appendices to the document. Additional reports, cited but not included in the appendices, are available at the LAUSD offices (355 South Grand Avenue, 15th Floor, LA, CA, 90071).

1.4 EIR PROCESS

This Draft EIR has been prepared to meet all of the substantive and procedural requirements of the 1970 CEQA (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.), and the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.). Accordingly, the LAUSD is the Lead Agency for this project, taking primary responsibility for conducting the environmental review and approving or denying the project.

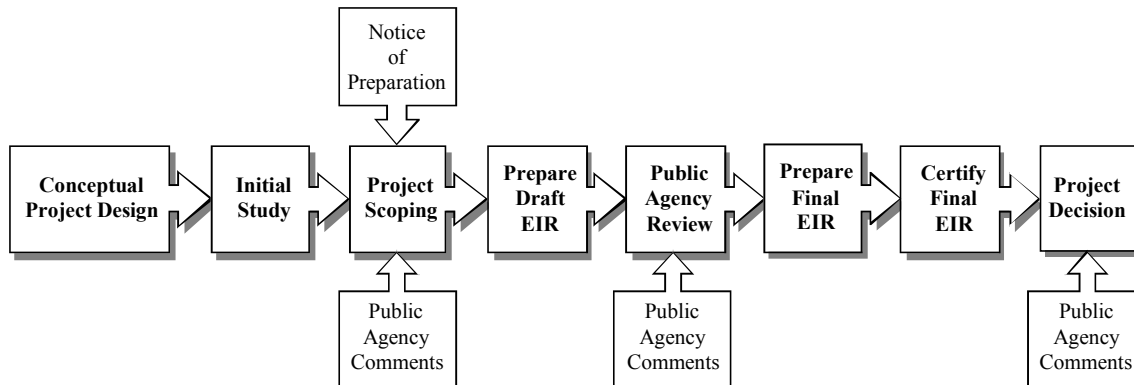
As a first step in complying with the procedural requirements of CEQA, the LAUSD prepared an IS to determine whether any aspect of the project, either individually or cumulatively, may cause a significant effect on the environment and, if so, to narrow the focus (or scope) of the environmental analysis.

After completion of the IS, the LAUSD filed a NOP with the State Clearinghouse in the Office of Planning and Research as an indication that a Draft EIR would be prepared. In turn, the IS/NOP was distributed to involved public agencies for a 30-day public review period, which began on July 10 and ended on August 8, 2002. The purpose of the public review period was to solicit comments on the scope and content of the environmental analysis to be included in the Draft EIR. The LAUSD received three agency comment letters and four community comment letters on the IS/NOP, which are included in Appendix A of this Draft EIR.

During the preparation of the Draft EIR, agencies, organizations, and persons whom the LAUSD believed might have an interest in this project were specifically contacted. Information, data, and observations from these contacts are included in the Draft EIR. Agencies or interested persons who did not respond during the public review period of the IS/NOP will have an opportunity to comment during the public review period of the Draft EIR, as well as at subsequent hearings on the project.

It should be noted that environmental impacts might not always be mitigated to a less than significant level. When this occurs, impacts are considered to be significant and unavoidable. If a public agency approves a project that has significant and unavoidable impacts, the agency shall state in writing the specific reasons for approving the project, based on the Final EIR and any other information in the public record for the project. This is termed a "statement of overriding considerations" and is used to explain the specific reasons why the benefits of a proposed project outweigh its unavoidable environmental effects. The statement is prepared, if required, after the Final EIR has been completed, and before action to approve the project has been taken.

A graphic description of the EIR preparation process is provided in the following flow chart.



1.5 AVAILABILITY OF THE DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR has been distributed to affected agencies, surrounding cities, counties and interested parties for a 45-day review period in accordance with Section 15087 of the CEQA Guidelines. During the 45-day public review period, which commences on June 17, 2003 and ends on August 1, 2003, the Draft EIR is available for general public review at the following locations:

- Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)
Office of Communications
333 South Beaudry Avenue, 1st Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017
Phone: (213) 241-6766
Hours: 8AM to 5PM (Monday to Friday)
- Pio-Pico Koreatown Branch Library
694 South Oxford Street
Los Angeles, CA 90005
Phone: (213) 368-7647
Hours: 10AM to 8PM (Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday)
12PM to 8PM (Tuesday and Thursday)
- Wilshire Branch Library
149 N. Saint Andrews Place
Los Angeles, CA 90004
Phone: (323) 957-4550
Hours: 12:30PM to 8PM (Monday and Wednesday)
12:30PM to 5:30PM (Thursday and Friday)
10AM to 5:30PM (Tuesday and Saturday)

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- Memorial Branch Library
4625 W. Olympic Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90019
Phone: (323) 938-2732
Hours: 12:30PM to 8PM (Monday and Wednesday)
12:30PM to 5:30PM (Tuesday and Thursday)
10AM to 5:30PM (Friday and Saturday)
 - Los Angeles Central Library
630 W. Fifth Street
Los Angeles, California 90071
Phone: (213) 228-7000
Hours: 10AM to 8PM (Monday to Thursday)
10AM to 6PM (Friday and Saturday)
1PM to 5PM (Sunday)
 - Belmont Senior High School
1575 W 2nd Street
Los Angeles, CA 90026
Phone: (213) 250-0244
Hours: 7AM to 3PM (Monday to Friday)
 - Berendo Middle School
1157 S. Berendo Street
Los Angeles, CA 90006
Phone: (213) 382-1343
Hours: 7AM to 3PM (Monday to Friday)
 - Virgil Middle School
152 North Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90004
Phone: (213) 388-0347
Hours: 7AM to 3PM (Monday to Friday)
 - Hoover Elementary School
2726 Francis Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90005
Phone (213) 387-3296
Hours: 7:30AM to 4:30PM (Monday to Friday)

Interested parties may provide written comments on the Draft EIR. Written comments on the Draft EIR must be postmarked by August 1, 2003 and should be addressed to:

Ms. Cecilia Masson
Los Angeles Unified School District
Office of Environmental Health and Safety
355 South Grand Avenue, 6th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90071

A public hearing on the Draft EIR will be held on July 12, 2003 at 10:00 am. The hearing will be held at Virgil Middle School, located at 152 North Vermont Avenue in the City of Los Angeles, California.

Upon completion of the 45-day public review period, written responses to all comments on environmental issues discussed in the Draft EIR will be prepared and incorporated into the Final EIR. Furthermore, written responses to comments received from any State agencies will be made available to these agencies at least 10 days prior to the Board of Education Meeting at which the Certification of the Final EIR will be considered. These comments, and their responses, will be included in the Final EIR for consideration by the LAUSD, as well as any other public decision-makers.