

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

System LLC (Applicant) has submitted an application to the City of West Hollywood (City) for approval of the Melrose Triangle project (proposed project). The proposed project is located within a triangular site bounded by Santa Monica Boulevard to the north, Almont Drive to the east, Melrose Avenue to the south, and Doheny Drive to the west. The project site consists of 3.05 gross acres, with a net developable area of 2.69 acres. The proposed project includes demolition of all existing on-site uses and construction of a mixed-use commercial and residential development totaling 302,944 square feet. The proposed project would include 82,021 square feet of retail/restaurant uses, 137,064 square feet of office uses, and 76 residential units. The building heights of the proposed project would range up to five stories aboveground, with four subterranean levels of parking.

1.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed project began in 2004. In 2004, the original project proposed a mixed-use commercial and residential development including art and wine storage, parking, and associated improvements on six aboveground floors and six subterranean levels. The original project proposal included 70,259 square feet of commercial/retail uses; 327,000 square feet of climate-controlled personal storage space intended to house individual art and wine collections on three of the subterranean levels; and 195 residential units (a total of 214,492 square feet) for a net development area above ground of 295,042 square feet. A Draft EIR was prepared and circulated for public review from January 17, 2008, to March 3, 2008.

Based on comments received during the Draft EIR public review period, and because the City subsequently adopted an updated General Plan, the Applicant revised the project plans in January 2012. The proposed project would include a total of 137,064 square feet of office uses, 82,021 square feet of retail and restaurant uses, and 76 residential units. A total of 20 percent of the residential units (approximately 15 units) would be made available to low- and moderate-income households, as required by the West Hollywood Municipal Code (WHMC) Section 19.22.030. The proposed project also would include 6,692 square feet of private open space and 9,463 square feet of common open space for use by residents.

1.3 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21000, et seq., requires that a public agency prepare an EIR when the public agency finds substantial evidence that the project may have a significant effect on the environment (PRC Section 21080 (d)). The basic purposes of CEQA are to:

1. Inform governmental decision makers and the public about the potential significant environmental effects of proposed activities;
2. Identify the ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced;
3. Prevent significant, avoidable damage to the environment by requiring changes in projects through the use of alternatives or mitigation measures when the governmental agency finds the changes to be feasible; and
4. Disclose to the public the reasons why a governmental agency approved the project in the manner the agency chose if significant environmental effects are involved.

The City, as the Lead Agency, originally prepared an Initial Study (IS) and issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR for the original project on July 30, 2004, which was distributed via the State Clearinghouse (SCH). The SCH issued a project number for the EIR (SCH No. 2004081014). In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, the NOP was circulated to responsible agencies and individuals for a period of 30 days, during which time written comments were solicited pertaining to environmental issues/topics that the EIR should evaluate. The City held a public scoping meeting on April 7, 2004, to present the original project and to solicit input from interested individuals regarding environmental issues that should be addressed in the Draft EIR. Due to the passage of time and a change to the construction schedule, the NOP was recirculated for public review on July 5, 2007. An additional public scoping meeting was held on July 25, 2007.

The Applicant revised the original project in January 2012 in response to comments received during the Draft EIR public review period and because the City subsequently adopted an updated General Plan. The City determined that the proposed project may have a significant effect on the environment, and a Recirculated Draft EIR was required to more fully evaluate the potential adverse environmental impacts that may result from the proposed project. As a result, this Recirculated Draft EIR was prepared in accordance with CEQA, and the CEQA Guidelines (CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, § 15000, et seq.). This Recirculated Draft EIR also complies with procedures established by the City for the implementation of CEQA. A NOP was recirculated for public review on February 9, 2012, in compliance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15082. The Recirculated Draft EIR NOP, NOP distribution list, and comment letters are provided in Appendix A.

Based on the City's review of environmental issues, this Recirculated Draft EIR analyzes the following environmental topics:

- Aesthetics;
- Air Quality;
- Biological Resources;
- Cultural and Paleontological Resources;
- Geology and Soils;
- Global Climate Change;
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
- Hydrology and Water Quality;
- Land Use and Planning;
- Noise;
- Population and Housing;
- Public Services and Utilities;
- Recreation; and
- Transportation and Circulation.

Pursuant to Section 15105(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, the City will circulate the Recirculated Draft EIR for the proposed project for public review and comment for a period of 45 days. During the

public review period, written comments concerning the adequacy of the document may be submitted by interested agencies and members of the public to:

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City of West Hollywood
8300 Santa Monica Blvd
West Hollywood, CA 90029-6219

After the public review and comment period, written responses to all comments received pertaining to environmental issues will be prepared as part of the Final EIR. As required by CEQA, responses to comments submitted by responsible public agencies will be distributed to those agencies for review prior to consideration of the Final EIR by the Planning Commission. Upon completion of the Final EIR and other required documentation, the Planning Commission may certify the EIR, adopt findings relative to the proposed project's environmental effects after implementation of mitigation measures, and approve or deny the lot line adjustment, development permit, demolition permit, and grading permit.

1.4 EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

As required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15128, this Recirculated Draft EIR identifies the potential effects of the proposed project that were determined not to be significant and adverse and therefore not addressed in the Recirculated Draft EIR. The proposed project would not result in adverse impacts related to agricultural resources and mineral resources. These issues are briefly discussed below along with reasons they were determined not to be significant.

1.4.1 Agricultural Resources

The project site is in an urbanized area and is not used for agricultural purposes. The site is not designated Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Because agricultural uses are not present and the site is not zoned for agricultural use, the proposed project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural uses or uses protected by a Williamson Act contract. The proposed project would not convert farmland to a nonagricultural use and consequently would not contribute to environmental changes that could result in the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use. Therefore, this issue is not evaluated further in this Recirculated Draft EIR.

1.4.2 Mineral Resources

The project site is not designated as a mineral resources recovery site on the City of West Hollywood General Plan, any Specific Plan, or other land use plan. The project site contains no known mineral resources that would be of value to the region or to the residents of the State. Therefore, this issue is not discussed further in this Recirculated Draft EIR.

1.5 FORMAT OF THE RECIRCULATED DRAFT EIR

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15120(c), this Recirculated Draft EIR contains the information and analysis required by CEQA Guidelines Sections 15122 through 15131. Each of the required elements is covered in one of the Recirculated Draft EIR chapters described below.

1.5.1 Chapter 1.0: Introduction

Chapter 1.0 describes the purpose and intended use of the Recirculated Draft EIR, the NOP and scoping processes, and the format of the Recirculated Draft EIR. A summary of effects found not to be significant and therefore not evaluated further in the Recirculated Draft EIR is also provided.

1.5.2 Chapter 2.0: Executive Summary

Chapter 2.0 provides an Executive Summary that (1) describes the proposed project, (2) describes the areas of controversy and the issues to be resolved, and (3) lists the significant adverse proposed project impacts, the mitigation measures that have been recommended to reduce any significant adverse impacts of the proposed project, and the level of significance of each adverse impact following mitigation.

1.5.3 Chapter 3.0: Project Description

Chapter 3.0 discusses the geographical setting of the project site, the existing uses on the project site, the proposed project, and the proposed project's goals, objectives, characteristics, components, and phasing.

1.5.4 Chapter 4.0: Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures

Chapter 4.0 analyzes the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. It is organized by the following environmental parameters: Aesthetics, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural and Paleontological Resources, Geology and Soils, Global Climate Change, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services and Utilities, Recreation, and Transportation and Circulation. The environmental setting discussions describe the existing conditions on and in the vicinity of the project site as they pertain to the environmental issues being analyzed (CEQA Guidelines § 15125).

The impact discussions identify and focus on the potentially significant adverse environmental effects of the proposed project. The potential direct and indirect, short-term and long-term, significant adverse effects of the proposed project on the environment are identified and described (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(a)).

Cumulative impacts are assessed based on build out of the proposed project and the surrounding area, including other known proposed projects in the surrounding area. Chapter 4.0 contains a list of related projects used in the cumulative impact analysis

Feasible measures that could avoid, minimize or lessen significant adverse impacts of the proposed project are identified for each significant adverse environmental effect (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4). The level of significance of each significant adverse impact after mitigation is described, and unavoidable significant adverse effects are identified where mitigation is not expected to reduce the proposed project's impacts to below a level of significance.

1.5.5 Chapter 5.0: Alternatives to the Proposed Project

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(f), Chapter 5.0 describes a reasonable range of alternatives that could feasibly attain the basic objectives of the proposed project and that are capable of eliminating any significant adverse environmental effects or reducing them to below a level of significance. The alternatives analyzed in Chapter 5.0 are: No Project/No New Development; Reduced Project/Reduced Office Uses; and Reduced Project/Historic Resource Avoidance.

1.5.6 Chapter 6.0: Long-term Implications of the Proposed Project

Chapter 6.0 includes discussions of the following topics as required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15126:

- (1) Significant irreversible environmental changes that would result from implementation of the proposed project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(c)); and
- (2) Growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(d)).

1.5.7 Chapter 7.0: Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

Chapter 7.0 provides a list of the proposed project's mitigation measures, defines the party responsible for implementation of each measure, and identifies the timing for implementation of each measure (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(e)).

1.5.8 Chapter 8.0: Significant Unavoidable Impacts

Chapter 8.0 summarizes those significant environmental impacts of the proposed project for which either no mitigation or only partial mitigation is feasible and which, therefore, would remain significant impacts after mitigation (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(b)).

1.5.9 Chapter 9.0: Organizations and Persons Consulted

Chapter 9.0 lists the organizations and persons contacted during preparation of the Recirculated Draft EIR.

1.5.10 Chapter 10.0: List of Preparers

Chapter 10.0 lists the City of West Hollywood and consultant personnel responsible for preparation of the Recirculated Draft EIR.

1.5.11 Chapter 11.0: References

Chapter 11.0 lists the references used in preparation of the Recirculated Draft EIR.

Appendices A through K of the Recirculated Draft EIR provide correspondence, technical reports, and other documentation used in the preparation of the Recirculated Draft EIR.

1.6 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

As permitted by Section 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines, this Recirculated Draft EIR references technical studies, analyses, and reports used in the preparation of the prior Draft EIR. Information from the documents that has been incorporated by reference has been briefly summarized in the appropriate section(s) of this Recirculated Draft EIR along with a description of how the public may obtain and review these documents.

All documents incorporated by reference are also available for review at the City of West Hollywood, Community Development Department, 8300 Santa Monica Boulevard, West Hollywood, California. These documents include:

- City of West Hollywood General Plan (2011);
- WHMC;
- City of West Hollywood Zoning Ordinance;
- *City of West Hollywood Department of Community Development Standard Development Permit Conditions for Commercial Projects*;
- *City of West Hollywood Department of Community Development Standard Development Permit Conditions for Residential Projects*; and
- *Photometric Survey* (Charles Company, January 2006).

1.7 AVAILABILITY OF THE RECIRCULATED DRAFT EIR

The Recirculated Draft EIR is subject to a 45-day public review period, starting from the date of the Notice of Availability (NOA). Copies of this Recirculated Draft EIR have been sent to the SCH, Responsible Agencies, agencies that have commented on the NOP, and all other interested parties that have requested notice and copies of the Recirculated Draft EIR.

The Recirculated Draft EIR is also available for review at the following locations:

Community Development Department
City of West Hollywood
8300 Santa Monica Boulevard
West Hollywood, California 90069-6216

West Hollywood Public Library
715 N. San Vicente Boulevard
West Hollywood, California 90069-5020

The Recirculated Draft EIR is also available on the City's website at www.weho.org. Interested individuals, organizations, Responsible Agencies, and other agencies can provide written comments

to the address below. Agency responses should include the name of a contact person within the commenting agency.

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