

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the purpose and intended uses of this environmental impact report (EIR) for the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan (project). It explains the organization of the EIR and includes a description of the environmental and public review process for the project.

La Brea Tar Pits, the George C. Page Museum (Page Museum), and associated facilities, are owned by the County of Los Angeles (County) but are managed by the non-profit Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History Foundation (Foundation). The Foundation's role is to carry out all County services including public access and programming, administration, and operation for the County of Los Angeles Museum of Natural History (Museum of Natural History), including La Brea Tar Pits and the Page Museum under the oversight of the County.

The County, as Lead Agency, acting through the Foundation proposes a redevelopment, or "reimagining," of the 13-acre La Brea Tar Pits site. The proposed project is referred to as the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan. The project includes a reimagined site design, expansion, and upgrades for the Tar Pits complex, including renovations to the Page Museum, and development of a new museum building. The project site is located at 5801 Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles. The project site is within Hancock Park and is adjacent to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA).

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE EIR AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The County has prepared this EIR to assess the environmental impacts of the project. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines identify the Lead Agency as the public agency with the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15367). The County is the CEQA Lead Agency for the project because the project is on County-owned land; the Museum of Natural History is a County departmental unit.¹ Thus, the County is responsible for the coordination and direct oversight of the environmental review process.

This EIR has been prepared in compliance with CEQA, codified as California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21000 et seq., and the State CEQA Guidelines in the California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3. The basic purposes of CEQA are to: 1) inform decision makers and the public about the potential significant environmental effects of proposed activities, 2) identify the ways that environmental effects can be avoided or significantly reduced, 3) prevent significant, avoidable environmental effects by requiring changes in projects through the use of alternatives or mitigation measures when feasible, and 4) disclose to the public the reasons an implementing agency may approve a project even if significant unavoidable environmental effects are involved.

¹ In accordance with Chapter 2.94 of the Los Angeles County Code and various other operating agreements, the County Museum of Natural History is a department of the County and has administrative charge and control over all County matters relating to history and science, and shall also include the administration of Hancock Park (except that area of said park devoted to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art [LACMA]), and the care, safeguarding, and maintenance of all exhibits, equipment, and structural improvements directly relating to exhibits, the administration and maintenance of LACMA, and other property hereafter acquired for or devoted to history and science.

An EIR uses a multidisciplinary approach, applying social and natural sciences to make a qualitative and quantitative analysis of all the foreseeable environmental impacts that a project would exert on the project's surrounding area and environs. As stated in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15151:

An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes 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.

As described in Section 15121(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines, this EIR is intended to serve as an informational document for public agency decision makers and the public. In accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126, this EIR describes the project and the existing environmental and regulatory setting, identifies environmental impacts associated with project implementation, identifies mitigation measures for potentially significant impacts, and provides an analysis of alternatives. Thresholds of significance for each environmental resource analyzed in this EIR are based on the Environmental Checklist contained in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines. The thresholds of significance are defined within each impact analysis section. The environmental impact analyses in this EIR are based on a variety of sources, including agency consultation, technical studies, and field surveys. The County would consider the information presented in this EIR, public comments received on the Draft EIR, and other factors, prior to approving the project. The Final EIR would be submitted for consideration and certification to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) prior to the Board's consideration of the project for approval.

1.2 SCOPING AND NOTICE OF PREPARATION PROCESS

Pursuant to Section 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the Lead Agency is required to send a Notice of Preparation (NOP) stating that an EIR would be prepared to the State Office of Planning and Research, responsible and trustee agencies, and federal agencies involved in funding or approving the project. The NOP must provide sufficient information for responsible agencies to make a meaningful response. At a minimum, the NOP must include a description of the proposed project, location of the proposed project, and probable environmental effects of the proposed project (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(a)(1)). Within 30 days after receiving the NOP, responsible and trustee agencies and the State Office of Planning and Research shall provide the Lead Agency with specific detail about the scope and content of the environmental information related to that agency's area of statutory responsibility that must be included in the EIR (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(b)).

On February 14, 2022, in accordance with Sections 15063 and 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the County published an NOP for the EIR and circulated it to governmental agencies, organizations, and persons who may be interested in the proposed project, including nearby landowners, homeowners, and tenants. The NOP requested comments on the scope of the EIR and asked interested parties for their suggestions regarding ways the project could be revised to reduce or avoid any significant environmental impacts. The NOP provided a general description of the proposed project, a description of the project site, and a preliminary list of potential environmental effects.

The 30-day NOP comment period extended through March 16, 2022. Copies of the NOP were made available for public review on the project's website, available at <https://tarpits.org/reimagine>. In addition, the NOP was also distributed via the following methods: direct mailings to residents in the 90036 zip code; two rounds of email blasts sent to residents in the 90036 and 90048 zip codes; and a full-page advertisement placed in the *Beverly Press/Park La Brea News* on February 17 and February 24, 2022.

Two public scoping meetings were held virtually via Zoom on March 2, 2022, at 2:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. to provide a description of the project and solicit input from any interested parties on the scope and content of the EIR in conformance with PRC Section 21083.9. Live language interpretation of the presentation and scoping meeting input was provided in Spanish and Korean during both scoping meetings.

A summary matrix of written comments received during the NOP comment period as well as verbal comments recorded at the two public scoping meetings is provided as an appendix to this EIR (Appendix A).

1.3 EIR CONTENTS

This EIR is organized into the following chapters, sections, and appendices:

1. **Introduction.** The introduction includes the purpose of an EIR and procedural information.
2. **Summary.** The summary provides a synopsis of the proposed project's potential impacts. It identifies, in an overview fashion, the project under consideration and its objectives; presents a summary of areas of controversy and issues to be resolved; and summarizes the proposed project's impacts and mitigation measures. This chapter also contains a summary analysis of the alternatives to the project, as well as a summary of environmental impacts in table format.
3. **Project Description.** This chapter includes information about the project location, the existing setting, the project site history, project objectives, project characteristics, and project construction.
4. **Environmental Setting.** This chapter describes the project's environmental setting, including existing physical characteristics of the project site. This chapter also provides a discussion of the cumulative context considered for the project, including growth projections and a list of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the vicinity of the project.
5. **Environmental Impact Analysis.** This chapter discusses the environmental setting as it relates to the various issue areas, regulatory settings, thresholds of significance, impact assessment methodology, project-specific impacts and mitigation measures, and cumulative impacts. The EIR analyzes the potentially significant impacts to the following resource areas, as identified during the preparation of the NOP:
 - Aesthetics
 - Air Quality
 - Biological Resources
 - Cultural Resources – Archaeological Resources
 - Cultural Resources – Historic Resources
 - Geology and Soils
 - Greenhouse Gas Emissions
 - Mandatory Findings of Significance
 - Hazards and Hazardous Materials
 - Hydrology and Water Quality
 - Land Use and Planning
 - Noise
 - Recreation
 - Transportation
 - Tribal Cultural Resources
 - Utilities and Service Systems

Environmental issue areas not identified in the list above are discussed in Chapter 7, Other CEQA Considerations, Section 7.4 Environmental Effects Found Not to be Significant. These include agricultural and forestry resources, energy, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, and wildfire.

6. **Alternatives Analysis.** The analysis summarizes the environmental advantages and disadvantages associated with the project and alternatives. As required, the “No Project Alternative” is included among the alternatives considered. An “Environmentally Superior Alternative” is identified.
7. **Other CEQA Considerations.** Identifies other potential environmental effects for which CEQA requires analysis, including the potential for the project to result in growth-inducing impacts, significant irreversible environmental changes, unavoidable significant environmental impacts, and effects found not to be significant and not discussed in detail in the EIR.
8. **References and Report Preparation.** This chapter provides a list of the references cited in the EIR. This chapter also provides a list of individuals who contributed to the preparation of the EIR.
9. **Appendices.** The appendices contain important information used to support the analyses and conclusions made in the EIR. Among the appendices that are included are technical reports addressing air quality and greenhouse gas emissions, biological resources, archaeological and tribal resources, historic resources, geology and soils, noise and vibration, and traffic and transportation.

1.4 AGENCY USE OF THE DOCUMENT

Lead Agency reviewers and decision makers (i.e., the County Board of Supervisors) will use the EIR as an informational document to assist in the decision-making process, ultimately resulting in approval, denial, or conditions of approval for the project. The following jurisdictions may also use this EIR in reviewing and issuing their respective authorizations (if applicable) and/or making recommendations during the project review process:

- Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
- Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment
- City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- South Coast Air Quality Management District
- Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

The CDFW is a potential responsible agency and trustee agency, as defined by Sections 15381 and 15386, respectively, of the State CEQA Guidelines. While CDFW does not have regulatory authority over approval of the broader La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan, CDFW could have regulatory authority over project activities within the riparian habitat and/or aquatic resources in and along Oil Creek and at the Lake Pit. Similarly, USACE could also have discretionary authority over activities in these features. These considerations are further discussed under thresholds b and c in Section 5.3.5 of this EIR.

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1.5 REVIEW OF THE DRAFT EIR

The Notice of Availability of this Draft EIR was distributed to responsible and trustee agencies, other affected agencies, interested parties, and all parties requesting a copy of the Draft EIR in accordance with PRC Section 21092(b)(3). The Notice of Completion and Notice of Availability of the Draft EIR are distributed and posted as required by CEQA. The public review period is 45 days. During this 45-day period, the EIR and its appendices will be available for review on the Natural History Museum’s website: <https://tarpits.org/reimagine>.

Printed copies of the documents with attached electronic appendices are also available for review during the 45-day public review period at the following locations and hours, as listed in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1. Document Review Locations

Location	Address	Hours of Operation	Online Access (URL), if available
George C. Page Museum (Front Desk)	5801 Wilshire Boulevard Los Angeles, CA 90036	Open daily 9:30 am to 5 pm, except the first Tuesday of the month	https://tarpits.org/reimagine
Julian Dixon Library	4975 Overland Avenue Culver City, CA 90230	Tuesday and Wednesday: 12 pm to 8 pm Thursday through Saturday: 10 am to 6 pm Sunday: Closed	n/a
View Park Bebe Moore Campbell Library	3854 West 54th Street View Park-Windsor Hills, CA 90043	Monday through Thursday: 10 am to 8 pm Friday and Saturday: 10 am to 6 pm Sunday: Closed	n/a
West Hollywood Library	625 North San Vicente Boulevard West Hollywood, CA 90069	Monday through Friday: 12 pm to 6 pm Saturday and Sunday: Closed	n/a
Chief Executive Office at the Hall of Administration	500 West Temple Street, Room 754 Los Angeles, California 90012	Appointment must be made for review. Appointments are available Monday through Friday, 8 am to 3 pm. Contact Alisa Chepeian, (213) 974-4266, achepeian@ceo.lacounty.gov	n/a

On behalf of the County of Los Angeles as the Lead Agency, comments on the Draft EIR should be addressed to:

Leslie Negritto, Chief Operating Officer
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Written responses to all significant environmental issues raised will be prepared and included as part of the Final EIR and the administrative record for consideration by decision makers for the project. The County may approve the project if the EIR has been certified per State CEQA Guidelines 15090.