

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the purpose and intended uses of the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan (project). It explains the organization of this volume (Volume I) of the Final EIR and includes a description of the environmental and public review process for the project. The Final EIR includes two volumes: Volume I (this volume) and Volume II which contains the full text and analysis of the EIR, including the incorporation of changes to the Draft EIR since its publication on September 11, 2023.

During the Draft EIR public review period, the County of Los Angeles (County) received 35 comment documents on the Draft EIR from agencies, organizations, and individuals through letters, emails, and comment cards. After considering and responding to these comments, the County prepared this Final EIR to address the concerns raised by the commenters and to provide supplemental information.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE FINAL EIR

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines specify that a Lead Agency is 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 County of Los Angeles Museum of Natural History (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. The County has prepared the Final EIR for consideration and certification by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board of Supervisors).

As described in CEQA Guidelines Sections 15088, 15089, 15090 and 15132, the Lead Agency must evaluate comments received on the Draft EIR and prepare written responses and consider the information contained in a Final EIR before approving a project. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15132, a Final EIR consists 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; and e) any other information added by the Lead Agency. The combination of Volume I (this volume) and Volume II provides all of this required information.

1.2 PROJECT SUMMARY

La Brea Tar Pits, the George C. Page Museum (Page Museum), and associated facilities, are owned by the 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 Museum of Natural History, including La Brea Tar Pits and the Page Museum, under the oversight of the County.

¹ In accordance with Chapter 2.94 of the Los Angeles County Code and 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 Los Angeles County Museum, and other property hereafter acquired for or devoted to history and science. For consistency with the Los Angeles County Code, this document refers to this governmental department as the "Museum of Natural History." In addition, when it is important to specify that the document is referring to the physical museum location rather than the governmental department, this document refers to the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (Natural History Museum), which is located at 900 Exposition Boulevard, Los Angeles, California, 90007.

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).

1.3 SUMMARY OF REVISED ALTERNATIVE 3

After completion of the Draft EIR, the County, acting through the Foundation, considered the EIR evaluation with respect to the Draft EIR comments made by the commenting entities and individuals. Many comments noted that the full build out of the Master Plan, as reflected in the Draft EIR, would result in historic resources losing their eligibility. Additionally, some commenters opined that the footprint of the project was too large and expressed that alternatives should be considered which would result in fewer impacts to the Page Museum. As a result, the County conducted further feasibility studies of the original Alternative 3; the County determined that further exploration of Alternative 3 should occur to determine if additional improvements could be made to the alternative to address the comments received on the Draft EIR. As a result of this process, the Final EIR expands the consideration of the original Alternative 3 with a refined version of the alternative. Refined Alternative 3 does not create additional or more intense environmental impacts than those previously disclosed when compared to the original Alternative 3 concept, as further detailed in Chapter 6, Alternative Analysis, of Volume II of the Final EIR.

1.4 OVERVIEW OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

In compliance with the CEQA Guidelines, the County, as the Lead Agency for the project, has provided opportunities for the public to participate in the environmental review process. As described below, throughout the environmental review process, an effort was made to inform, contact, and solicit input from the public and various Federal, State, regional, and local government agencies and other interested parties on the project.

1.4.1 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. 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 Volume II of the Final EIR (Appendix A).

1.4.2 Draft Environmental Impact Report

The Notice of Availability (NOA) of the 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 NOA of the Draft EIR were distributed and posted as required by CEQA. The public review period was from September 11, 2023 through October 26, 2023. During the review period, the Draft EIR and its appendices were available for review on the Natural History Museum's website: <https://tarpits.org/reimagine>.

A newspaper advertisement of the NOA and Draft EIR comment period and information regarding the public meeting was also placed in the Los Angeles Times. Printed copies of the documents with attached electronic appendices were also available for review during the 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

During the Draft EIR public review period, the County of Los Angeles received 35 comment documents on the Draft EIR from agencies, organizations, and individuals through letters, emails, and comment

cards. A public meeting was held on September 30, 2023 from 9:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. at La Brea Tar Pits to present project information, provide information on the Draft EIR's analysis and findings regarding the project, and provide instructions on how to submit written comments on the Draft EIR. All written comments received during the public review period and responses to these received comments are provided in Chapter 2, Responses to Comments, of Volume I of the Final EIR.

1.4.3 Final Environmental Impact Report

Following the close of the Draft EIR public review and comment period, the County of Los Angeles prepared responses to comments received on the Draft EIR, provided in Volume I of the Final EIR. The comments do not provide any indication that the Draft EIR was so fundamentally and basically inadequate and conclusory in nature that meaningful public review and comment were precluded, as defined in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5.

Consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 21092.5, responses to agency comments will be provided to each commenting agency at least 10 days prior to the Board of Supervisors' consideration of the EIR. The entire Final EIR (Volumes I and II) will also be publicly available online at least 10 days prior to the Board of Supervisors' consideration of the EIR at: <https://tarpits.org/public-process>.

Through the preparation of the Final EIR, the County made minor revisions to the text of the Draft EIR, which are provided in Volume II of the Final EIR. No significant changes have been made to the information contained in the Draft EIR that would result in a new or substantially increased environmental impact because of the responses to comments, and no significant new information has been added that would require recirculation of the document under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5. These revisions are summarized in Chapter 3, Revisions, Clarifications and Corrections on the Draft EIR, of Volume I of the Final EIR.

1.5 FINAL EIR VOLUME I CONTENTS

This volume of the Final EIR is organized into the following chapters:

1. **Introduction.** This chapter describes the purpose of the Final EIR, provides a summary of the proposed project, summarizes the Final EIR public review process, and presents the contents of the Final EIR.
2. **Responses to Comments.** This chapter presents all comments received by the County during the public review period of the Draft EIR (September 11, 2023 through October 26, 2023) as well as the responses to those comments. A total of 35 comment documents (letters, emails, and comment cards) were received.
3. **Revisions, Clarifications and Corrections to the Draft EIR.** This chapter presents revisions, clarifications, and corrections that have been made to the Draft EIR. Deletions are shown with ~~striketrough~~ and additions are shown with underline. No significant changes have been made that would result in a new or substantially increased environmental impact, and no significant new information has been added that would require recirculation of the document under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5.

1.6 AGENCY USE OF THE DOCUMENT

Lead Agency reviewers and decision makers (i.e., the County Board of Supervisors) will use the Final 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 Final EIR in reviewing and issuing their respective authorizations (if applicable):

- Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
- Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment
- City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation
- 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 Volume II of the Final EIR.

Lead Agency:

County of Los Angeles
Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County
Leslie Negritto, Chief Financial and Operating Officer
Phone: (213) 763-3303
Email: lnegritto@nhm.org

Environmental Consultant:

SWCA Environmental Consultants
Bobbette Biddulph, Senior Project Manager
320 North Halstead Street, Suite 120
Pasadena, California 91107

This page intentionally left blank.