

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The purpose of this Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA) is to evaluate the environmental effects of the proposed Central Park Apartments Project (proposed project; project) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In addition, the SCEA evaluates the project's consistency with the Southern California Association of Government's (SCAG's) Connect SoCal Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy Environmental Impact Report (Connect SoCal RTP/SCS EIR) adopted in September 2020, and incorporates the feasible mitigation measures, performance standards, and/or criteria from SCAG's Connect SoCal EIR, the City's General Plan 2015 EIR and the 2004 Central District Specific Plan EIR into the proposed project (included as **Appendix A** to this SCEA).

The SCEA form of CEQA documentation was established by SB 375 to provide streamlined environmental review for certain "Transit Priority Projects." SB 375 (Public Resources Code § 21155(b)) defines Transit Priority Projects (TPPs) as projects that shall:

- (1) contain at least 50 percent residential use, based on total building square footage and, if the project contains between 26 percent and 50 percent nonresidential uses, a floor area ratio of not less than 0.75;
- (2) provide a minimum net density of at least 20 dwelling units per acre; and
- (3) be within one-half mile of a major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor included in a regional transportation plan. A major transit stop is as defined in § 21064.3, except that, for purposes of this section, it also includes major transit stops that are included in the applicable regional transportation plan. For purposes of this section, a high-quality transit corridor means a corridor with fixed route bus service with service intervals no longer than 15 minutes during peak commute hours. A project shall be considered to be within one-half mile of a major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor if all parcels within the project have no more than 25 percent of their area farther than one-half mile from the stop or corridor and if not more than 10 percent of the residential units or 100 units, whichever is less, in the project are farther than one-half mile from the stop or corridor.

See **Section 3.0, SCEA Assessment Eligibility**, for a discussion of the project's consistency with the criteria listed above.

The intent of the CEQA streamlining provisions is not to undercut or circumvent CEQA requirements, but rather to reduce documentation and redundancy and to provide an incentive for TPPs that are consistent with a larger effort to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by integrating transportation and land use planning.

An SCEA is comparable to an Initial Study-Mitigated Negative Declaration since the lead agency must find that all potentially significant impacts of a project have been identified, adequately analyzed, and mitigated to a level of insignificance. However, unlike a negative declaration, the SCEA need not consider the cumulative effects of the project that have been adequately addressed and mitigated in prior EIRs, in this case the SCAG Connect SoCal RTP/SCS EIR, the City's General Plan EIR, and the Central District Specific Plan EIR. Also, growth-inducing impacts are not required to be referenced, described, or addressed and project specific or cumulative impacts from cars and light duty truck trips on global warming or the regional transportation network need not be referenced, described or discussed.

1.2 PROJECT SUMMARY

The subject of this SCEA is a proposed mixed-use development located at 86 South Fair Oaks Avenue, at the northeast corner of Fair Oaks Avenue at Dayton Street (Assessor's Parcel # 5722-001-002). The project site is bordered by a one-story commercial building and the existing Green Hotel Apartments on the north, Castle Green on the east, Dayton Street on the south, and South Fair Oaks Avenue on the west (refer to **Figure 2.0-3, Aerial Overview**).

The proposed project is a 6-story plus mezzanine transit-oriented mixed-use development that includes retail space, restaurants, and work/live units at the ground level and mixed-rate apartment units on levels 2-6. Using height averaging, the building height would average 69 feet with a maximum roof height to 90 feet.¹ Along Fair Oaks Avenue, the ground floor of the proposed building includes approximately 6,200 square feet of retail and food uses. Four work/live units, approximately 1,300 square feet each, are proposed in the ground floor along Dayton Street, facing Central Park. The proposed project contains 84 apartment units (24 studios, 37 one-bedroom flats, three (3) one-bedroom townhouses, 18 two-bedroom flats, and two (2) two-bedroom townhouses), including eight (8) on-site residences for very low-income

¹ Height Averaging allows for additional height permitted over no more than 30% of the building footprint (excluding parking garages), provided that the average height of that footprint does not exceed the otherwise required max building height. Refer to page 2.0-18 for a detailed height averaging calculation.

residents. All parking for the proposed project would be located in four (4) levels of underground parking that accommodate 195 parking spaces, including replacement of existing parking spaces for the adjacent Green Hotel Apartments, which currently utilizes the surface parking located on the project site. Access to and from the proposed project site would be from Dayton Street on the southeast corner of the proposed project site.

The proposed project would include amenity space for project residents, including a swimming pool and spa with cabana and changing rooms, gym, lounge, and multiple roof decks/terraces. The proposed project would provide 16,231 sf of open space, which would be divided between approximately 12,037 sf of hardscape and 4,194 sf of landscape (softscape). Landscaping for the proposed project would include native and adaptive species that are drought tolerant. The proposed project would include 38 proposed trees, including one 96" box tree, 10 - 60" box trees, 21 - 24" box trees and 6 - 36" box trees. (Landscape Plans are presented in **Figure 2.0-32 and Figure 2.0-33**).

The project site is zoned CD-1 (Central District Specific Plan Sub-district 1, Old Pasadena Subdistrict) and has a General Plan Land Use designation of High Mixed Use. A mixed-use building is an allowable use within both the CD-1 zone and the High Mixed Use land use designation, subject to certain restrictions enumerated in the Central District Specific Plan, such as the requirement of commercial uses on the ground floor and the exclusion of residential uses on the ground floor. Development of the site is subject to the review and approval of the City of Pasadena Design Commission. In addition, the applicant has applied for a Vesting Tentative Tract Map to allow for the potential to convert the apartments to condominiums, and a Private Tree Removal for removal and relocation of Protected Trees as outlined in **Table 2.0-1**.

The project is utilizing the State Density Bonus Law pursuant to Government Code § 65915 to allow for an increase in the residential base density from 64 units to 84 units (excluding the four work-live units which are classified as commercial uses by the City's Zoning Code), eight of which will be reserved for Very Low Income residents. No other entitlement actions are required or being requested by the project applicant.

1.3 STATUTORY BACKGROUND

The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 amended the CEQA regulations to add Chapter 4.2, Implementation of the Sustainable Communities Strategy (PRC § 21155), which provides a CEQA exemption for Sustainable Community Projects and streamlined CEQA analysis for Transit Priority Projects.

One such streamlining provision is the SCEA, the provisions of which are specified primarily in PRC § 21155.2. § 21155.2(a) states that if a TPP incorporates all feasible mitigation measures, performance

standards, or criteria set forth in the prior applicable environmental impact reports and adopted findings made pursuant to PRC § 21081, then it shall be eligible for a Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment. For a detailed analysis of the project's compliance with SCEA statutory requirements, see the "Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment Eligibility" section of this document.

1.4 RESPONSES TO AGENCY AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

According to CEQA Guidelines §§ 15073 and 15074, the lead agency must consider the comments received during consultation and review periods together with the SCEA Environmental Checklist. However, comments received on a SCEA Environmental Checklist are not required to be attached to the SCEA Environmental Checklist, nor must the lead agency make specific written responses to public agencies or individual commenters. Further, CEQA does not require the lead agency to send responses individually or directly to commenters.

However, according to Public Resources Code (PRC) § 21155.2 (b) (4):

Prior to acting on the Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment, the lead agency shall consider all comments received.

As a number of similar issues related to the analysis in the SCEA Environmental Checklist were raised by multiple commenters, the City of Pasadena, as the lead agency, has chosen to provide responses to the comments received during the public review process for the proposed project SCEA in the form of a number of Topical Responses. In order to provide the public and the decisionmakers with the information required under PRC § 21155.2 (b) (4), these responses are provided in Section 7.0 of this SCEA document.

1.5 REVISIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Revisions to the SCEA that represent minor changes or additions in response to certain agency and public comments received on the SCEA, and additional edits to provide clarification of SCEA text, are provided in underline/~~strikeout~~ format throughout the text in the relevant sections. These changes do not add significant new information that would affect the analysis or conclusions presented in the SCEA.

1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE SCEA

This SCEA is organized into eight sections as follows:

- **Section 1.0, Introduction.** This section (above) provides introductory information summarizing the key elements of the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act and information about the Project.
- **Section 2.0, Project Information/Project Description.** This section contains a detailed project description, contact information, existing and proposed general plan land use and zoning information, description of surrounding land uses, project objectives, a summary of required approvals, and the cumulative development scenario.
- **Section 3.0, Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment Eligibility.** This section analyzes the proposed project's consistency with the Transit Priority Project Criteria, the project's consistency with SCAG's Connect SoCal (2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy) goals and policies and identifies applicable mitigation measures from previously prepared and certified EIRs.
- **Section 4.0, Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment - Initial Study Checklist.** This section contains the completed Initial Study Checklist showing the significance level under each environmental impact category. Each environmental issue identified in the Initial Study Checklist contains an assessment and discussion of impacts associated with each subject area. When the evaluation identifies potentially significant effects, as identified in the Checklist, mitigation measures are provided to reduce such impacts to a less than significant level.
- **Section 5.0, List of Preparers.** This section provides a list of City personnel, other governmental agencies, and consultant team members that participated in the preparation of the SCEA.
- **Section 6.0, References.** This section provides references for the sources of information cited in the SCEA.
- **Section 7.0, Master Responses to Comments.** This section provides topical responses to the agency and public comments received on the Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment - Initial Study Checklist.
- **Appendices.** Includes various documents, technical reports, and information used in the SCEA and can be found in the case file for the proposed project.