

# Section 1.0

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose

This introduction is intended to provide the reader with general information regarding (1) overview and background of the proposed project and site, (2) the purpose of an environmental impact report (EIR), (3) standards for EIR adequacy, (4) an introduction to the environmental review process, (5) the format and content of this EIR, and (6) the EIR availability and processing.

### 1.2 Project Overview

The proposed YWCA Kimpton Hotel project (“proposed project” or “project”) involves the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the existing 40,570-square-foot YWCA building located at 78 North Marengo Avenue (City of Pasadena, Los Angeles County) and the addition of a new building adjacent to the existing YWCA building that ranges between three and six stories in height and totals 87,342 square feet. The YWCA building would be connected to the new building solely by a bridge at the third floor of the new construction to the rooftop of the north wing of the YWCA building. Together with the existing YWCA building and the new building, the project would become an approximately 127,912-square-foot, approximately 179-room, Kimpton Hotel.

Completed in phases between 1921 and 1923, the existing YWCA building is a historically significant property that is listed as a contributor to the Pasadena Civic Center Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historical Resources, and is a City-designated historic monument. Since 1997, the building has been unutilized, vacant, and deteriorating significantly.

The new hotel would consist of approximately 179 guestrooms and suites, approximately 1,989 square feet of meeting facilities, approximately 5,630 square feet of ballroom space, approximately 1,197 square feet of hospitality parlors, and an approximately 2,350 square-foot, 140-seat restaurant. The YWCA building would be rehabilitated into about 13 guestrooms and suites including a hotel restaurant, ballrooms, and meeting rooms with support spaces. A portion of the roof level above the existing gymnasium and pool complex would be structurally strengthened and converted into an outdoor, rooftop pool area. The existing YWCA building basement would provide for kitchen storage, general storage, mechanical rooms and administrative function space.

Adjacent to the YWCA building, connected solely by a bridge on the third floor, would be a new three- to six-story hotel building containing approximately 166 hotel rooms. The maximum height of the new hotel building would be 60 feet high and the project as a whole would have a floor area ratio of 1.5, which would be consistent with the development standards for the Central District, Sub-area 2 (CD-2) zoning district in which the project site is located. The Robinson Memorial public art installation, which is located on the project site at the southwest corner of North Garfield Avenue and Holly Street, would remain in place and be unchanged by the

project. Parking for the new hotel would be valet-only. All parking would be off-site and would be provided at existing parking lots and structures in the nearby area. Currently, three parking garage locations are under consideration for this purpose: AT&T garage located at 177 East Colorado Boulevard, Holly Street garage located at 150 East Holly Street, and Ramona Garage located at 240 Ramona Street. In addition, a turnout is proposed along Marengo Avenue for guest drop-off, valet parking, and access to the main entrance of the hotel and restaurant. The hotel would have two secondary entrances/exits, one of which would be located on Holly Street, with a north-south-oriented walkway proposed to traverse existing lawn and landscaping at that location, and the second of which would be located on Union Street, between the existing YWCA building and the proposed new addition to the east. A service entrance and loading area would also be located along Union Street.

### 1.3 Purpose and Legal Authority

The passage of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in 1970 established a process that (1) informs general decision makers and the public of potentially significant environmental effects of proposed activities, (2) to the extent feasible identifies ways that environmental impacts can be avoided or reduced, and, (3) to the extent feasible prevents significant, avoidable impacts to the environment by requiring changes in projects through the use of alternatives and/or mitigation measures.

This EIR serves as an informational document for the public and decision-makers of the City of Pasadena (City). During the EIR process, there will be public hearings before Commissions appointed by the City Council, including the Historic Preservation Commission, the Design Commission, and the Planning Commission, which will provide input on the EIR and make recommendations to the City Council. The EIR process will culminate with a City Council public hearing to consider certification of a Final EIR and consideration of the proposed project.

### 1.4 EIR Adequacy

The principle use of an EIR is to provide information as one aspect of a comprehensive planning analysis. Given the important role of the EIR in the planning and decision-making process, it is imperative that the information presented in the EIR be factual, adequate, and complete. The standards for adequacy of an EIR, defined in Section 15151 of the State CEQA Guidelines, are as follows: 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 light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should 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.

This EIR has been prepared by the City of Pasadena in accordance with CEQA, the State CEQA Guidelines, and City guidelines for the implementation of CEQA.

## 1.5 Lead, Responsible and Trustee Agencies

The State CEQA Guidelines define “lead,” “responsible,” and “trustee” agencies. The City of Pasadena is the lead agency for the project because it has the initial responsibility for approving the project. A “responsible agency” refers to a public agency other than the lead agency that has discretionary approval over the project. A “trustee agency” refers to a state agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by the project. There are no responsible or trustee agencies associated with this proposed project.

## 1.6 Environmental Review Process

### 1.6.1 Process Overview

The EIR process, as required under CEQA, is summarized below. The steps are presented in sequential order.

- **Notice of Preparation (NOP).** Immediately after deciding that an EIR is required, the lead agency files an NOP soliciting input on the EIR scope to “responsible,” “trustee,” and involved federal agencies; to the State Clearinghouse, if one or more state agencies is a responsible or trustee agency; and to parties previously requesting notice in writing. A scoping meeting to solicit public input on the issues to be addressed in the EIR, while not always required, may nonetheless be conducted by the lead agency.
- **Draft EIR.** Following distribution and posting of the NOP, the lead agency prepares the Draft EIR, which must contain the following: (1) table of contents or index, (2) summary, (3) project description, (4) environmental setting, (5) environmental impacts (direct, indirect, cumulative, growth-inducing and unavoidable impacts), (6) alternatives, (7) mitigation measures, (8) irreversible changes, and (9) organizations and persons consulted.
- **Public Notice and Review.** Upon completion of a Draft EIR, the lead agency must prepare a Notice of Availability of a Draft EIR. The Notice must be posted in the County Clerk’s office for 30 days (Public Resources Code Section 21092.3) and be sent to anyone requesting it. Additionally, public notice of Draft EIR availability must be given through at least one of the following procedures: (1) publication in a newspaper of general circulation, (2) posting on and off the project site, and/or (3) direct mailing to owners and occupants of contiguous properties. The lead agency must consult with and request comments on the Draft EIR from responsible and trustee agencies as well as adjacent cities and counties. The minimum public review period for a Draft EIR is 30 days. When a Draft EIR is sent to the State Clearinghouse for review, the public review period must be at least 45 days, unless a shorter review period is approved by the State Clearinghouse (Public Resources Code 20191). Distribution of the Draft EIR may be required through the State Clearinghouse.
- **Notice of Completion.** Concurrent with issuance of a Notice of Availability, the lead agency must file a Notice of Completion with the State Clearinghouse as soon as it completes the Draft EIR.

- **Final EIR.** Following the public and agency review and comment period, a Final EIR must be prepared, which must include the following components: (1) the Draft EIR or a revision thereof, (2) comments received during public review of the Draft EIR, (3) a list of persons and entities commenting during the public review period, and (4) responses to comments received.
- **Certification of Final EIR.** Prior to approving a project, the lead agency must certify that (1) the Final EIR has been completed in accordance with CEQA, (2) the Final EIR was presented to the decision-making body of the lead agency, and (3) the decision-making body reviewed and considered the information in the Final EIR prior to approving the project.
- **Lead Agency Project Decision.** The lead agency may (1) disapprove a project because of its significant environmental effects, (2) require changes to a project to reduce or avoid significant environmental effects, or (3) approve a project despite its significant environmental effects, if the proper findings and statement of overriding considerations are adopted.
- **Findings/Statement of Overriding Considerations.** For each significant impact of the project identified in the EIR, the lead or responsible agency must find, based on substantial evidence, that either (1) the project has been changed to avoid or substantially reduce the magnitude of the impact, (2) changes to the project are within another agency's jurisdiction and such changes have or should be adopted, or (3) specific economic, social, or other considerations make the mitigation measures or project alternatives infeasible. If an agency approves a project with unavoidable significant environmental effects, it must prepare a written Statement of Overriding Considerations that sets forth the specific social, economic, or other reasons supporting the agency's decision.
- **Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.** When an agency makes findings on significant environmental effects identified in the EIR, it must adopt a reporting or monitoring program for mitigation measures that were adopted or made conditions of project approval to mitigate significant effects.
- **Notice of Determination.** An agency must file a Notice of Determination after deciding to approve a project for which an EIR is prepared. A local agency must file the Notice with the County Clerk. The Notice must be posted for 30 days. Posting of the Notice starts a 30-day statute of limitations for CEQA challenges.

### 1.6.2 Notice of Preparation and Scoping

To determine which environmental topics should be addressed in this EIR, the City of Pasadena prepared and circulated an NOP from March 5, 2015 through April 6, 2015. The NOP (including an Initial Study) was circulated in order to receive input from interested agencies (e.g., responsible and trustee agencies) and the public on the EIR. Per the State CEQA Guidelines, an NOP is to be circulated for 30 days, allowing agencies and the public to provide the lead agency with specific detail about their desires for the scope and content of the environmental information and analysis to be included in the EIR. A list of letters and comments submitted

during the NOP comment period is provided in Appendix A. Copies of the letters and comments received during the NOP comment period are also provided in Appendix A.

The City held two scoping meetings, one on Thursday, March 19, 2015 and a second on Wednesday, March 25, 2015, to solicit comments and to inform the public of the proposed EIR.

### 1.6.3 Topics Addressed in the EIR

This EIR addresses the issues determined to be potentially significant pursuant to the Initial Study, included in Appendix A of this EIR. The EIR also addresses potentially significant environmental impacts of the project in combination with cumulative development in the City in accordance with provisions set forth in the State CEQA Guidelines. The EIR recommends feasible mitigation measures, where possible, that would reduce or eliminate adverse environmental effects.

The topics addressed in this EIR include:

- Cultural Resources;
- Energy;
- Land Use and Planning;
- Noise and Vibration; and
- Transportation and Traffic.

In addition to these technical sections, other important information is incorporated as part of this EIR. As required by CEQA, this EIR also includes the following components: (1) description of the existing environmental setting, (2) description of the proposed project, (3) description and analysis of alternatives (included in Section 4.0, *Alternatives*), and (4) sections that summarize the cumulative, long-term, and irreversible effects associated with the proposed project.

## 1.7 Incorporation by Reference

In accordance with Section 15150 of the State CEQA Guidelines, portions of this EIR incorporate by reference information from other documents that are available to the public. In such cases, the document being incorporated by reference is identified by name and the information from that document is summarized in the relevant EIR discussion. In particular, portions of the following documents were incorporated by reference in the YWCA Kimpton Hotel Project EIR:

- City of Pasadena, Revised Final Environmental Impact Report Pasadena General Plan, State Clearinghouse No. 2013091009, prepared by PlaceWorks, August 2015.
- City of Pasadena, Public Review Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration Union Street Condominiums Project, prepared by Michael Baker International, August 2015.
- City of Pasadena, All Saints Church Master Development Plan Final Environmental Impact Report, State Clearinghouse No. 2009101073, prepared with the assistance of Rincon Consultants, Inc., January 2012.

- City of Pasadena, A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Pasadena Certifying the Environmental Impact Report, and Adopting CEQA Findings and a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for the All Saints Church Master Development Plan, 2012.

Documents referenced in the EIR or incorporated by reference are available for review at the City of Pasadena, Planning and Community Development Department, 175 North Garfield Avenue, Pasadena, California 91101.

## 1.8 Availability of the Draft EIR

This Draft EIR has been made available to affected agencies, surrounding cities, and interested parties for a 60-day review period, as specified in Section 15087 of the State CEQA Guidelines. During the 60-day public review period, which commences on **February 5, 2016** and ends on **April 5, 2016**, the Draft EIR is available for general public review at the following locations:

- City of Pasadena Permit Center, Planning and Community Development Department at 175 North Garfield Avenue, Window #4.
- City of Pasadena Public Library, Central Branch, 285 East Walnut Avenue.

Additionally, the Draft EIR can be downloaded or reviewed via the Internet at:

- <http://www.cityofpasadena.net/ywca/>.

Interested parties may provide written comments on the Draft EIR. Written comments on the Draft EIR should be received on or before **April 5, 2016** and should be addressed to:

Kevin Johnson, Senior Planner  
City of Pasadena  
Design and Historic Preservation Section  
175 North Garfield Avenue  
Pasadena, California 91101  
[kevinjohnson@cityofpasadena.net](mailto:kevinjohnson@cityofpasadena.net)

Interested parties may also provide written and verbal comments at the following scheduled public hearings:

Historic Preservation Commission  
Pasadena City Hall Council Chambers (Room # S249)  
100 North Garfield Avenue  
**March 1, 2016**, 6:00 pm

Design Commission  
Pasadena City Hall Basement Training Room (Room #S018)  
100 North Garfield Avenue  
**March 8, 2016**, 6:00 pm

Planning Commission  
Pasadena City Hall Council Chambers (Room #S249)  
100 North Garfield Avenue  
**March 9, 2016, 6:30 pm**

Upon completion of the 60-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. These comments, and their responses, will be included in the Final EIR for consideration by the City of Pasadena City Council, as well as other public decision-makers.

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