

1.0 INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This introduction is intended to provide the reader with important information regarding (1) the purpose of an EIR; (2) a description of the environmental review process conducted for this project to date; (3) the lead, responsible, and trustee agencies for the project; and (4) the general format of this EIR.

PURPOSE AND LEGAL AUTHORITY

This Draft EIR evaluates the proposed Verdugo Gardens project. It was designed to implement the City of Glendale's (hereafter, "the City") and the Glendale Redevelopment Agency's (hereafter, "the Agency") goals of revitalizing downtown Glendale. The Verdugo Gardens project is a mixed-use development consisting of 287 for-sale housing units, ground-floor retail/commercial uses, a public open-space plaza and park, landscaping, lighting, utilities, subterranean and above-grade parking, which would be screened from public streets with perimeter housing, and associated amenities. The residential units are designed in a variety of layouts and sizes ranging from one to three bedrooms in flat, townhouse, loft, and penthouse configurations. The proposed project would include a 24-story building with a total height of approximately 266 feet; it would include an amenity deck on the 7th floor, reaching a height of about 73 feet, and a pool deck on the 22nd floor, reaching a height of approximately 231 feet. Development of the proposed project would require the demolition and removal of two on-site buildings located along the northern and southern portions of the site. The project is anticipated to be ready for occupancy in 2010.

This Draft EIR has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the *CEQA Guidelines*, and applicable Agency procedures for implementing CEQA and the *CEQA Guidelines* (Resolution R-314), including applicable City CEQA documentation procedures and requirements. This EIR identifies and discusses potential project-specific and cumulative environmental impacts that may occur should the proposed project be implemented. The intent of this EIR is to: (1) be an informational document, which serves to inform public agency decision makers and the general public of the potential environmental impacts of the project; (2) identify possible ways to minimize or avoid any potential significant impacts either through mitigation or the adoption of alternatives; and (3) disclose to the public required agency approvals.

The principal use of an EIR is to provide input and information to the comprehensive planning analysis undertaken for this project. Given the important role of the EIR in this planning and decision-making

process, it is important 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 *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 in accordance with the above standards for adequacy of an EIR under CEQA.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Agency determined that an EIR should be prepared for the Verdugo Gardens project. As a result, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was prepared and circulated between February 21, 2006 and March 22, 2006 for the required 30-day review period. The purpose of the NOP was to solicit early comments from public agencies with expertise in subjects that would be discussed in the Draft EIR. The NOP and Initial Study are contained in **Appendix 1.0(a)** of this EIR. In addition, to facilitate local participation, the City held a scoping meeting on the project to solicit oral and written comments from the public and public agencies. The public scoping meeting was held March 8, 2006. Comments received during the NOP review period and at the meeting are contained in **Appendix 1.0(b)** of this EIR.

Topics evaluated in this Draft EIR have been identified based upon the responses to the NOP, comments received at the scoping meeting, and review of the project by Agency staff. The Agency determined through this initial review process that impacts related to the following topics are potentially significant and require assessment in this Draft EIR:

- Land Use and Planning
- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Services Systems
- Population and Housing
- Traffic and Circulation
- Noise
- Public Services
- Recreation

LEAD, RESPONSIBLE, AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

The public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project is designated as the "Lead Agency" under CEQA. For the Verdugo Gardens project, the Glendale Redevelopment Agency is the Lead Agency. As such, the Agency is responsible for ensuring that the EIR satisfies the procedural and substantive requirements of CEQA and for considering and certifying the adequacy and completeness of the EIR prior to making any decision regarding the project.

"Responsible Agency" means a public agency, which proposes to carry out or approve a project, for which the Lead Agency is preparing or has prepared an EIR or Negative Declaration. For purposes of CEQA, the term Responsible Agency includes all public agencies other than the Lead Agency having discretionary approval authority over the project. The City of Glendale serves as a Responsible Agency. During the NOP review period, no other public agency identified itself as a Responsible Agency.

"Trustee Agency" means a state agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by a project, which are held in trust for the people of the State of California. During the NOP review period, no public agency identified itself as a Trustee Agency.

EIR REVIEW PROCESS

This EIR will be circulated for a 45-day public review and comment period. During this period, written comments concerning the adequacy of the Draft EIR may be submitted by any interested person and/or affected agency, to the City of Glendale Redevelopment Agency, 633 East Broadway, Room 201, Glendale, California 91205, Attn: David Ahern, Project Manager.

Following the public review period, all oral and written comments will be responded to in writing, and incorporated into a Final EIR. At least 10 days prior to a hearing to certify the Final EIR, proposed responses to comments on the Draft EIR by responsible agencies will be sent to those agencies. The Final EIR will then be considered by the Agency and City Council, which will determine whether to certify the adequacy and completeness of the document in accordance with CEQA. No aspect of the proposed project would be approved until after the Final EIR is certified. Review of the project may occur at a joint meeting of the City Council, Redevelopment Agency Board, and Planning Commission.

REPORT FORMAT

As stated, a principal objective of CEQA is that the environmental review process be a public one. In meeting this objective, the EIR must inform members of the general public, decision makers, and technically oriented reviewers of the physical impacts associated with a proposed project. To this end,

specific features have been incorporated into this EIR to make it more understandable for non-technically-oriented reviewers, yet provide the technical information necessary for agency personnel.

A description of the organization of this EIR and the content of each section is provided below to assist the reader in using this EIR as a source of information about the proposed project. Sections of the Draft EIR following this introduction are organized as follows:

Section 2.0, Summary, includes a general description of the environmental setting, project description, and alternatives to the proposed project. Environmental impacts and mitigation measures are summarized in a tabular form.

Section 3.0, Project Description, presents a detailed description of the proposed project as required by the *CEQA Guidelines*. Topics addressed in this section include the project objectives and the characteristics of the project.

Section 4.0, Environmental Impact Analysis, contains analysis of each of the environmental topics addressed in this EIR. Each topic is addressed in separate subsections; these are, environmental setting, project impacts, cumulative impacts, mitigation measures, and residual impacts after mitigation.

Section 5.0, Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes, evaluates whether the project would result in the irretrievable commitment of resources or would cause irreversible changes in the environment.

Section 6.0, Growth Inducement, discusses the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth in the area.

Section 7.0, Alternatives, provides analysis of alternatives to the proposed project. As required by the *CEQA Guidelines*, the reasons for selecting the analyzed alternatives are discussed, in addition to a comparative analysis of each alternative with the project.

Section 8.0, List of EIR Preparers, provides a list of persons involved in the preparation of this EIR.

Section 9.0, References and Persons Consulted, provides a list of all organizations and persons contacted during preparation of the Draft EIR, and a list of all documents used as a basis of information for the Draft EIR.

Appendices to this EIR (provided on CD inside the back cover) include the NOP and written responses, as well as selected technical reports and data used or generated during preparation of the Draft EIR.