

2. Introduction

2.1 CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that all state and local governmental agencies consider the environmental consequences of projects over which they have discretionary authority before taking action on those projects. This draft environmental impact report (DEIR) has been prepared to satisfy CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines for the McKinley Elementary School Campus Master Plan Project (Proposed Project). An EIR is the public document designed to provide decision makers and the public with an analysis of the environmental effects of a project, and to identify potentially significant environmental impacts, and if found, develop mitigation measures and alternatives to the project, if feasible, and if not, to adopt a statement of overriding conditions should the lead agency still wish to proceed with the project. To that end, the EIR must analyze for and disclose potentially significant environmental impacts that cannot be avoided; growth-inducing impacts; effects found not to be significant; and significant cumulative impacts of all past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. Compliance with CEQA applies to California government agencies at all levels: local, regional, and state agencies, boards, commissions, and special districts (such as school districts and water districts).

The lead agency means “the public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project which may have a significant effect upon the environment” (Public Resources Code [PRC] section 21067). The Santa Monica–Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD or District) is the public agency that will carry out this Proposed Project. For this reason, the SMMUSD is the CEQA lead agency for the Proposed Project.

PRC Section 21080(a) states that analysis of a project’s environmental impact is required for any “discretionary projects proposed to be carried out or approved by public agencies....” In this case, the SMMUSD has determined that an EIR is required to determine whether there is substantial evidence that construction and operation of the Proposed Project would result in environmental impacts and impose feasible mitigation for any discovered potentially significant environmental impacts or cumulatively considerable impacts.

2.2 NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND INITIAL STUDY

The SMMUSD determined that an EIR would be required for the Proposed Project and issued an Initial Study/Notice of Preparation (IS/NOP) on January 13, 2023 (see Appendix B). Comments received during the IS/NOP public review period, from January 13, 2023, to February 12, 2023, are in Appendix C. The IS/NOP was distributed to State, regional, and local government agencies and other interested parties to solicit comments and inform the public of the potential environmental issues that the EIR would address. A scoping meeting was held on January 31, 2023, where an overview of the Proposed Project and CEQA process were

2. Introduction

presented. The comments received during the public review period, as well as a summary of the comments received at the scoping meeting, are provided in Appendix C of this DEIR.

The NOP process helps determine the scope of the environmental issues to be addressed in the DEIR. Based on this process and the Initial Study for the Proposed Project, certain environmental categories were identified as having the potential to result in significant impacts. Environmental issues that were considered to have potentially significant impacts are addressed in this DEIR; issues identified to result in less than significant impact or no impact are addressed in the IS/NOP (see Appendix B) and summarized in Chapter 6, *Other CEQA Considerations*. In response to public comments received during the IS/NOP's public review period, two additional environmental topics, Land Use and Planning as well as Recreation, were determined to have potentially significant impacts and are addressed in this DEIR.

2.3 PURPOSE OF THIS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

This DEIR has been prepared to satisfy the requirements of CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. An EIR is a public informational document that provides decision makers and the public with an analysis of the environmental effects of the Proposed Project and indicates possible ways to reduce or avoid environmental damage through the identification of mitigation measures and/or alternatives to the Proposed Project. The EIR must also disclose potentially significant environmental impacts that cannot be avoided; growth-inducing impacts; effects found not to be significant; and significant cumulative impacts associated with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects.

The intent of this DEIR is to provide sufficient information on the potentially significant environmental impacts of the Proposed Project to allow the SMMUSD to make an informed decision on whether to carry out the Project, including identification of mitigation measures and project alternatives that would substantially lessen or avoid potentially significant environmental impacts caused by the Proposed Project. Specific discretionary actions of public agencies concerning the Proposed Project are described in Section 3.7, *Required Permits and Approvals*.

This DEIR has been prepared in accordance with requirements of the:

- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended (PRC §§ 21000 et seq.)
- State Guidelines for the Implementation of the CEQA of 1970 (CEQA Guidelines), as amended (California Code of Regulations §§ 15000 et seq.)

SMMUSD and other public agencies with direct authority over the Proposed Project (e.g., responsible and trustee agencies) that may use this EIR in their decision-making or permitting processes will consider the information in this EIR along with other information that may be presented during the CEQA process. In addition, this EIR is the primary reference document in the formulation and implementation of a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for the Proposed Project.

In accordance with CEQA, public agencies are required to make appropriate findings for each potential environmental impact identified in the EIR that cannot be mitigated to a less than significant level. If the lead

2. Introduction

agency (and responsible agencies using this CEQA document for associated permits or approvals) decides that the benefits of a project outweigh any identified significant environmental effects that cannot be mitigated to below a threshold of significance, the lead agency must adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations that states the reasons supporting its actions despite the project's significant and unavoidable environmental impacts. The actions involved in the implementation of the Proposed Project are described in Section 3.8, *Required Permits and Approvals*. Other agencies, including responsible and trustee agencies, that may have discretionary approval over the Proposed Project or components of it are also described in that section.

2.4 SCOPE OF THIS DEIR

The scope of the DEIR was determined based on the IS/NOP, comments received in response to the IS/NOP, and comments received at the scoping meeting conducted by the SMMUSD. Pursuant to §§ 15126.2 and 15126.4 of the CEQA Guidelines, the DEIR must identify any potentially significant adverse impacts and impose feasible mitigation measures that would reduce or eliminate these impacts to less than significant levels. The information in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, establishes the basis for analyzing future, project-related environmental impacts.

2.4.1 Impacts Considered Less Than Significant

During preparation of the IS/NOP, the SMMUSD determined that eight environmental impact categories would not be significantly affected by the Proposed Project. These categories are addressed in Chapter 6, *Other CEQA Considerations*, and in more detail in Appendix B of this DEIR.

- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Biological Resources
- Mineral Resources
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Utilities/Service Systems
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Wildfire

2.4.2 Potentially Significant Adverse Impacts

Through the IS/NOP process, the SMMUSD determined that further analysis was needed of 12 environmental factors to determine whether the Proposed Project would result in potentially significant impacts. These topics are evaluated in detail in Chapter 5, *Environmental Analysis*, of this DEIR.

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology And Soils

2. Introduction

- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use/Planning
- Noise
- Recreation
- Transportation

2.4.3 Unavoidable Significant Adverse Impacts

Unavoidable adverse impacts may be considered significant on a project-specific basis, cumulatively significant, and/or potentially significant. However; this DEIR did not identify any significant and unavoidable adverse impacts, as defined by CEQA, that would result from implementation of the Proposed Project.

2.5 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

Some documents are incorporated by reference into this DEIR, consistent with § 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines, and they are available for review at the SMMUSD's Office.

- City of Santa Monica Municipal Code, November 2022
- City of Santa Monica General Plan, 2002
- McKinley Elementary School Master Plan, October 2020 (Appendix A(1))
- Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, Districtwide Educational Specifications, March 2019

2.6 FINAL EIR CERTIFICATION

This DEIR is being circulated for a 45-day review period, from March 21, 2023, to May 5, 2023. Interested agencies and members of the public are invited to provide written comments on the DEIR. In compliance with §§ 15085(a) and 15087(a)(1) of the CEQA Guidelines, the SMMUSD, serving as the lead agency, has published a Notice of Completion (NOC) and Notice of Availability (NOA) of the DEIR that indicate that the DEIR and all associated technical appendices can be viewed at the following locations:

- Santa Monica–Malibu Unified School District, 1717 4th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90401
- McKinley Elementary School Administrative Office, 2401 Santa Monica Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90404
- City of Santa Monica Planning Counter, 1685 Main Street, Santa Monica, CA 90401
- City of Santa Monica Public Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90401

In addition, the DEIR is available on line at the SMMUSD website: <https://www.smmusd.org/Page/5594>

The NOC/NOA has been transmitted to the State Clearing House and Los Angeles County Clerk and distributed to all property owners within 500 feet of the campus and/or those who have previously requested such notice. Any public agency or members of the public wishing to comment on the DEIR must submit their

2. Introduction

comments in writing or send them via email with the subject heading “McKinley Elementary School Master Plan Project” to the following addresses prior to the end of the public review period:

- **Mail:** Carey Upton, Chief Operations Officer
Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District
1717 4th Street
Santa Monica, California 90401
- **Email:** Cupton@smmusd.org

Upon completion of the 45-day review period, the SMMUSD will review all written comments received and prepare written responses for each. The Final EIR (FEIR) will include all received comments, the SMMUSD’s responses to those comments, and any changes to the DEIR that result from comments. The FEIR will be presented to the SMMUSD’s Board of Education for potential certification as the environmental document for the Proposed Project. All persons who comment on the DEIR will be notified of the availability of the FEIR and the date of the public hearing.

2.7 MITIGATION MONITORING

PRC § 21081.6 requires that agencies adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) for any project for which it has made findings pursuant to PRC § 21081. Such a program is intended to ensure the implementation of all mitigation measures adopted through the preparation of the EIR.

The MMRP for the Proposed Project will be completed after the FEIR and prior to consideration of the Proposed Project by the District’s Board of Education.

2. Introduction

This page intentionally left blank.