

Section 2.0
INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE





2.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

2.1 PURPOSE

The City of Santa Clarita is the Lead Agency under the *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)*, and is responsible for preparing the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital (HMNMH) Master Plan project (State Clearinghouse No. 2004111149). This EIR has been prepared in conformance with *CEQA* (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.), *CEQA Guidelines* (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.), and the City of Santa Clarita Environmental Guidelines. The principal *CEQA Guidelines* sections governing content of this document are Sections 15120 through 15132 (Content of an EIR), and Section 15168 (Program EIR).

Both the Public Resources Code and the *CEQA Guidelines* discuss the use of “tiering” environmental impact reports by lead agencies. Public Resources Code Section 21068.5 defines “tiering” as:

“The coverage of general matters and environmental effects in an environmental impact report prepared for a policy, plan, program or ordinance followed by narrower or site-specific environmental impact reports which incorporate by reference the discussion in any prior environmental impact report and which concentrate on the environmental effects which: (a) are capable of being mitigated, or (b) were not analyzed as significant effects on the environment in the prior environmental impact report.”

The Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital Master Plan Program EIR is intended to serve as a Program EIR or “first tier EIR.” *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15168 states that a Program EIR can be prepared in connection with “the issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program.”

The approach of a Program EIR is appropriate for evaluating “a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and can be related either: (1) geographically; (2) as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions; (3) in connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or (4) as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways” (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15168).

A Program EIR has the following advantages: “It provides an occasion for a more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives than would be practical in an EIR on an individual action; it ensures consideration of cumulative impacts that might be slighted in a case-by-case analysis; it avoids duplicative reconsideration of basic policy considerations; it allows the lead agency to consider broad policy alternatives and program-wide mitigation measures at an early time when the agency has greater flexibility to deal with basic problems of cumulative impacts; and it allows reduction in paperwork” (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15168).

Subsequent development associated with the Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital Master Plan must be reviewed in the context of this Program EIR to determine if additional environmental documentation is required. If the subsequent project would have environmental effects not addressed in the Program EIR, additional environmental review would be required. Where no new



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effects and no new mitigation measures are involved, the subsequent project can be approved without additional environmental documentation. Where an EIR is required for a subsequent project, the EIR should implement the applicable mitigation measures developed in the Program EIR, and focus its analysis on site-specific issues not previously addressed.

The purpose of this Revised Draft EIR is to review the existing conditions, analyze potential environmental impacts, and identify feasible mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant effects of the proposed approximately 30-acre HMNMH Master Plan project, located in the southwestern portion of the City of Santa Clarita (for more detailed information regarding the proposal, refer to Section 3.0, Project Description).

In accordance with Section 15121 of the *CEQA Guidelines*, a primary purpose of this EIR is to provide decision-makers and the public with specific information regarding the environmental effects associated with development of the site, identify ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project. Mitigation measures are provided which may be adopted as Conditions of Approval in order to reduce the significance of impacts resulting from the project. In addition, this EIR is the primary reference document in the formulation and implementation of a mitigation monitoring program for the proposed project.

The City of Santa Clarita, which has the principal responsibility of processing and approving the project, and other public agencies (i.e., responsible and trustee agencies) that may use this EIR in the decision-making or permit process will consider the information in this EIR, along with other information that may be presented during the *CEQA* process. Environmental impacts are not always mitigable to a level considered less than significant; in those cases, impacts are considered significant unavoidable impacts. In accordance with Section 15093(b) of the *CEQA Guidelines*, if a public agency approves a project that has significant impacts that are not substantially mitigated (i.e., significant unavoidable impacts), the agency shall state in writing the specific reasons for approving the project, based on the Final EIR and any other information in the public record for the project. This is termed a “statement of overriding considerations” per Section 15093(b) of the *CEQA Guidelines*.

This document analyzes the environmental effects of the project to the degree of specificity appropriate to the current proposed actions, as required by Section 15146 of the *CEQA Guidelines*. This analysis considers the actions associated with the project to determine the short-term and long-term effects associated with their implementation. This EIR discusses both the direct and indirect impacts of this project, as well as the cumulative impacts associated with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. *CEQA* requires the preparation of an objective, full disclosure document to inform agency decision-makers and the general public of the direct and indirect environmental effects of the proposed action, provide mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate significant adverse effects, and identify and evaluate reasonable alternatives to the proposed project.



2.2 COMPLIANCE WITH *CEQA*

The Draft EIR is subject to a 45-day review period by responsible and trustee agencies and interested parties. In accordance with the provisions of Sections 15085(a) and 15087(a)(1) of the *CEQA Guidelines*, as amended, the City of Santa Clarita, serving as the Lead Agency: 1) publishes a notice of availability of a Draft EIR in *The Signal*, a newspaper of general circulation, which states that the Draft EIR will be available for review at City Hall, located at 23920 Valencia Boulevard, and three Los Angeles County public library branches (Newhall, Valencia, and Canyon Country branches); and 2) prepares and transmits a Notice of Completion (NOC) to the State Clearinghouse. Proof of publication is available at the City of Santa Clarita.

Any public agency or members of the public desiring to comment on the Draft EIR must submit their comments in writing to the individual identified on the document's NOC prior to the end of the public review period. During the public review period, the Santa Clarita Planning Commission will hold a regularly scheduled public hearing regarding the Draft EIR. The public will be afforded the opportunity to orally comment on the Draft EIR at the public hearing. Such comments shall be recorded and shall have the same standing and response requirements as written comments provided during the public review period. Upon the close of the public review period, the Lead Agency will then proceed to evaluate and prepare responses to all relevant oral and written comments received from both citizens and public agencies during the public review period.

The Final EIR will consist of the Draft EIR, revisions to the Draft EIR, and responses to comments addressing concerns raised by responsible agencies or reviewing parties. After the Final EIR is completed and at least 10 days prior to its certification, a copy of the response to comments made by public agencies on the Draft EIR will be provided to the respective agency.

2.3 EIR SCOPING PROCESS

In compliance with *CEQA Guidelines*, the City of Santa Clarita has taken steps to maximize opportunities to participate in the environmental process. During the preparation of the Draft EIR, an effort was made to contact various federal, state, regional, and local government agencies and other interested parties to solicit comments and inform the public of the proposed project. This included the distribution of an Initial Study and Notice of Preparation (NOP).

In accordance with Section 15063(a) of the *CEQA Guidelines*, as amended, the City undertook the preparation of an Initial Study. The Initial Study determined that a number of environmental issue areas may be impacted by implementation of the HMNMH Master Plan. As a result, the Initial Study determined that this Draft EIR should address the project's significant impacts on a variety of environmental issue areas.

The EIR focuses primarily on changes in the environment that would result from the proposed project. The EIR identifies potential impacts resulting from the construction and operation of the proposed project and provides measures to mitigate potential significant impacts. Those impacts that cannot be mitigated to levels less than significant are also identified. This EIR addresses impacts in the following areas:



- ◆ Land Use and Planning
- ◆ Population, Housing, and Employment
- ◆ Aesthetics, Light, and Glare
- ◆ Traffic and Circulation
- ◆ Air Quality
- ◆ Noise
- ◆ Geology, Soils, and Seismicity
- ◆ Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- ◆ Hydrology and Water Quality
- ◆ Fuel Protection Services
- ◆ Sheriff Services
- ◆ Schools/Education
- ◆ Solid Waste
- ◆ Electricity
- ◆ Natural Gas
- ◆ Water Supply
- ◆ Wastewater

Based on the Initial Study, issues for which no significant impacts are anticipated to occur are addressed in Section 9.0, Effects Found Not to be Significant, of this EIR.

2.3.1 NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Pursuant to the provision of Section 15082 of the *CEQA Guidelines*, as amended, the City of Santa Clarita circulated a Revised NOP to public agencies, special districts, and members of the public requesting such notice for a 30-day period commencing July 13, 2006 through August 11, 2006.

The original Notice of Preparation was sent out for public review on November 30, 2004 through December 29, 2004. In addition, a Draft Environmental Impact Report was prepared and circulated for public review from November 14, 2005 through December 29, 2005. Since the issuance of the original Notice of Preparation and release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report in 2004 and 2005, respectively, the project applicant has since changed the project description.

The purpose of the NOP was to formally convey that the City is preparing a Draft EIR for the HMNMH Master Plan project, and that as Lead Agency was soliciting input regarding the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR. The Initial Study was circulated with the NOP. The NOP, Initial Study, and responses to the NOP are provided in Appendix A, Initial Study/Notice of Preparation, and Appendix B, NOP Comments.

2.3.2 NOP AND SCOPING RESULTS

During the NOP circulation period, the City of Santa Clarita advertised a public scoping meeting. The meeting was held on December 13, 2004 at City Hall, located at 23920 Valencia Boulevard in Santa Clarita. The meeting was held with the specific intent of affording interested individuals/groups and public agencies a forum in which to orally present input directly to the Lead Agency in an effort to assist in further refining the intended scope and focus of the EIR as described in the NOP and Initial Study.



The following specific environmental concerns were raised by responses to the 2006 Revised NOP for the proposed project (the numerical reference in parenthesis is the EIR Section in which the analysis is provided). The NOP responses are contained in Appendix B:

- ◆ Noise impacts from ambulance sirens, parking structures (including car alarm and horn noise), and construction activities (Section 5.6, Noise);
- ◆ Parking capacity impacts associated with Master Plan buildout (Section 9.0, Effects Found Not To Be Significant);
- ◆ Recreational facility impacts (Section 9.0, Effects Found Not To Be Significant);
- ◆ Water quality and drainage impacts (Section 5.9, Hydrology and Water Quality);
- ◆ Wastewater conveyance and treatment capacity impacts (Section 5.17, Wastewater); and
- ◆ Air quality impacts from construction and operation (Section 5.5, Air Quality).

The following specific environmental concerns were raised by responses to the 2004 NOP for the proposed project (the numerical reference in parenthesis is the EIR Section in which the analysis is provided). The NOP responses, along with written comments received at the meeting, are contained in Appendix B:

- ◆ Growth inducement impacts at buildout of the HMNMH Master Plan (Section 7.0, Long-Term Implications of the Proposed Project);
- ◆ Noise impacts associated with heliport operations (i.e., flight path, type and size of helicopters, frequency, etc.) (Section 5.6, Noise);
- ◆ Noise impacts from stationary equipment and facility operations (i.e., loading docks [hours of operations], central plant, landscaping activities) (Section 5.6, Noise);
- ◆ Traffic impacts to surrounding roadway system (Section 5.4, Traffic and Circulation);
- ◆ Lighting impacts to surrounding residential uses (Section 5.3, Aesthetics, Light, and Glare);
- ◆ Visual impacts of proposed hospital facilities and landscaping (Section 5.3, Aesthetics, Light, and Glare); and
- ◆ Health risks associated with storage of hazardous materials at the hospital's Central Utility Plant (Section 5.8, Hazards and Hazardous Materials).

2.4 FORMAT OF THE EIR

The Draft EIR is organized into 11 sections.

Section 1.0, Introduction and Purpose, provides *CEQA* compliance information.

Section 2.0, Executive Summary, provides a brief project description and summary of the environmental impacts and mitigation measures.



Section 3.0, Project Description, provides a detailed project description indicating project location, background and history, and project characteristics, phasing, and objectives, as well as associated discretionary actions required.

Section 4.0, Basis of Cumulative Analysis, describes the approach and methodology for the cumulative analysis.

Section 5.0, Environmental Analysis, contains a detailed environmental analysis of the existing conditions, project impacts, recommended mitigation measures, and unavoidable adverse impacts for a number of environmental topic areas.

Section 6.0, Alternatives, describes a reasonable range of alternatives to the project or to the location of the project which could feasibly attain the basic project objectives.

Section 7.0, Long-Term Implications of the Proposed Project, discusses growth-inducing impacts and irreversible changes associated with the proposed project.

Section 8.0, Significant Environmental Effects Which Cannot be Avoided if the Proposed Action is Implemented, discusses significant environmental changes that would be involved in the proposed action, should it be implemented.

Section 9.0, Effects Found Not to Be Significant, provides an explanation of potential impacts which have been determined not to be significant.

Section 10.0, Organizations and Persons Consulted, identifies all federal, state, or local agencies, other organizations, and individuals consulted.

Section 11.0, Bibliography, identifies reference sources for the EIR.

The Appendices (Appendices A – I) contain technical documentation for the project.

2.5 RESPONSIBLE AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

Public agencies with jurisdiction over the project site, or from which approval of the project is required, include the following:

- ◆ California Department of Conservation;
- ◆ California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD);
- ◆ California Department of Health Services;
- ◆ California Department of Toxic Substances Control;
- ◆ California Department of Transportation (Caltrans);
- ◆ California Department of Water Resources;
- ◆ Los Angeles County Fire Department;
- ◆ Los Angeles County Sanitation District;



- ◆ Native American Heritage Commission;
- ◆ Office of Emergency Services;
- ◆ Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 4;
- ◆ South Coast Air Quality Management District; and
- ◆ Valencia Water Company.

2.6 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

Pertinent documents relating to this EIR have been cited in accordance with Section 15148 of the *CEQA Guidelines*, which encourages “incorporation by reference” as a means of reducing redundancy and length of environmental reports. The following document, which is available for public review at the City of Santa Clarita, is hereby incorporated by reference into this EIR. Information contained within this document has been utilized for each section of this EIR. A brief synopsis of the scope and content of this document is provided below:

City of Santa Clarita General Plan. Adopted 1991 (et seq.). *The City of Santa Clarita General Plan (General Plan)* is the long-range planning guide for growth and development for the City of Santa Clarita. The *General Plan* has two basic purposes: 1) to identify the goals for the future physical, social, and economic development of the City; and 2) to describe and identify policies and actions adopted to attain those goals. It is a comprehensive document that addresses seven mandatory elements/issues in accordance with State law. These elements include Land Use, Housing, Circulation, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety. Other optional issues that affect the City have also been addressed in the Plan. The *City of Santa Clarita General Plan* was utilized throughout this EIR as the fundamental planning document governing development on the project site. Background information and policy information from the Plan is cited in several sections of the EIR.