

III. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

A. OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Regional Context

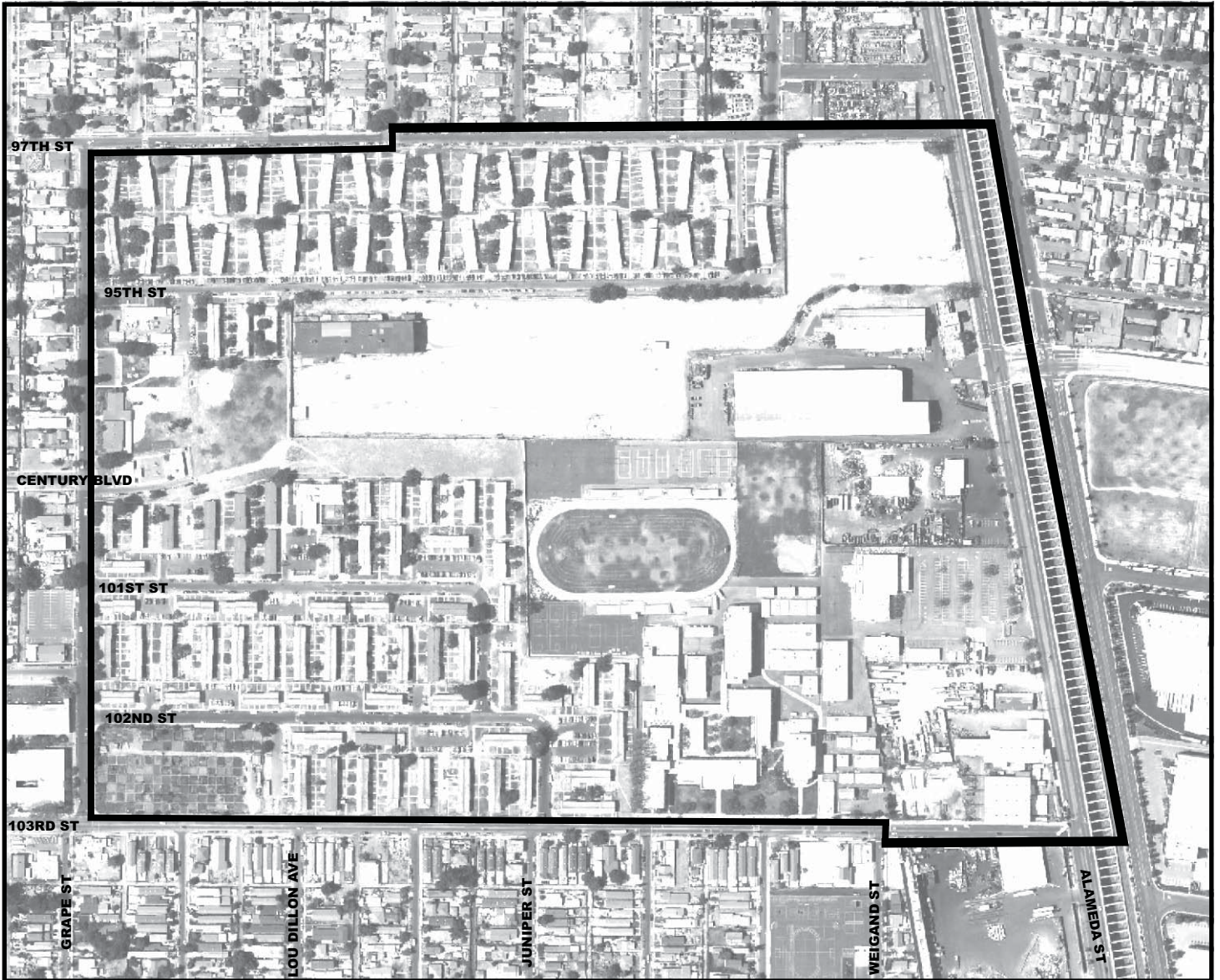
The Jordan Downs Specific Plan area is located approximately eight miles south of downtown Los Angeles, one mile north of the Glenn Anderson Freeway (I-105), in the northeastern portion of the community of Watts. Although the majority of the Specific Plan area is within the Southeast Los Angeles Community Plan Area of the City of Los Angeles, the Specific Plan area is located at the intersection of several different local jurisdictions that include the cities of Los Angeles, Lynwood, and South Gate, and the County of Los Angeles, with approximately 41.74 acres of the project site in unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Watts is a distinct two-square-mile community within Southeast Los Angeles. Although incorporated as a separate city in 1906, Watts was annexed into the City of Los Angeles in 1926. It is the furthest north community in the 15th Council District that also includes a portion of South Los Angeles, Harbor Gateway, Harbor City, Wilmington, and San Pedro. Watts is one of a number of residential communities that developed along the Alameda railroad corridor that has historically linked the commercial centers of downtown Los Angeles to the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. Land uses in the Alameda Corridor in general, and in Watts in particular, reflect the variety of conflicts between residential and industrial land uses. Within the region, Watts is distinguished by the concentration of public housing projects including Jordan Downs, Nickerson Gardens, Imperial Courts, and Gonzaque Village. Almost 40 percent of the City's 6,500 public housing units are located within Watts.


Local Setting

The Specific Plan area is generally bound by 97th Street to the north, Alameda Street to the east, 103rd Street to the south, and Grape Street to the west, and is surrounded by a residential neighborhood consisting primarily of one- or two-story single-family residences with some one-way streets to the north, west and south. To the east, facing Alameda Street, is mainly industrial, and separated from the adjoining communities by the ten-mile-long Alameda Corridor railroad trench that allows the frequent passage of the 40 to 50 long-distance freight trains each day traveling from the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. Tweedy Avenue located immediately to the east of the Specific Plan area is one of the few nearby locations with a road crossing over the Alameda Corridor railroad trench.

As shown in the aerial photograph of the Specific Plan area presented in **Figure III-1**, the neighborhoods to the north and south of the Jordan Downs public housing complex are oriented on a north-south street grid, while the Jordan Downs public housing blocks are oriented with an east-west street grid, resulting in a lack of connectivity with the surrounding neighborhoods. The residential neighborhoods to the north, west and south are characterized by long rectangular blocks, typically 275 to 300 feet wide and over 800 feet long, served by 20-foot-wide mid-block alleys, with 40- to 50-foot-wide single-family lots. The neighborhood streets are typically 50 to 60 feet wide, with a 30- to 40-foot curb-to-curb dimension and 10-foot sidewalks (or sidewalks with parkways) on either side. Most of the neighborhood streets allow parallel parking on either side. Many of the residences have front-accessed driveways leading to side driveways, garages, or car ports, so the sidewalks have frequent curb cuts and reduced on-street parking.



LEGEND:

 Specific Plan Area

SOURCE: TAHA, 2010.

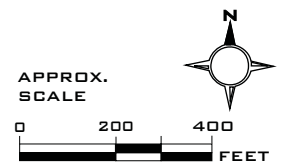


FIGURE III-1

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH

Regional and Local Access

The Specific Plan area is accessed by car from the I-105 via the Wilmington Avenue off-ramps to the south. The Specific Plan area is about one-mile from the freeway, via Wilmington Avenue to 103rd Street. Other arterial streets surrounding the Specific Plan area include Alameda Street to the east, 103rd Street to the south, and Century Boulevard to the west. When the Jordan Downs public housing complex was plotted in the 1950s, a 114-foot-wide Class II Highway right-of-way was left undeveloped for a future extension of Century Boulevard, running from Grape Street to Alameda Street to align with Tweedy Avenue to the east through the Specific Plan area. Century Boulevard only developed as a major highway with the development of Los Angeles International Airport five miles to the west. Its extension from Grape Street to Alameda Street and Tweedy Avenue never occurred, and the two blocks between Wilmington Avenue and Grape Street were laid out as a 60-foot-wide neighborhood street.

The Blue Line station at 103rd Street is the closest Metro Rail Line to the Specific Plan area, an approximately 10- to 15-minute walk. Its frequent high speed service (every 12 minutes) connects to downtown Los Angeles within 27 minutes and Long Beach within 25 minutes. One station south, located in the median of the I-105, is the Wilmington/Imperial interchange with the Green Line, which also runs a service every 12 minutes during the day to Norwalk to the east and Redondo Beach to the west with a shuttle bus from the Aviation/LAX stop to the airport. In November 2008, Los Angeles County Measure R was approved by voters, providing funding for extending the Green line into LAX and the Blue Line from the Downtown Metro Center to Little Tokyo with connections, via Union Station, to the Gold Line and regional Metrolink services. The new Expo Line from Metro Center to Culver City, currently scheduled for completion in 2011, will provide access to employment along its corridor.

The east/west Metro Local 117 bus line runs every 20 minutes along 103rd Street to LAX (45 minutes away) via Alameda Street and Tweedy Avenue east to Downey. A north/south Metro Local 254 bus line runs every 60 minutes along 103rd Street and up Grape Street to Boyle Heights. Additional services include the South Gate Shuttle 612 bus line, (which runs every 45 minutes) from the Wilmington Metro Station up Wilmington Avenue and around South Gate. A Watts DASH bus loop, operated by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation, serves the Specific Plan area via 103rd Street every 20 minutes.

Specific Plan Area Characteristics

In total, the Specific Plan area encompasses approximately 118.5 acres and includes the following components: 1) Jordan Downs Public Housing Complex, 2) Jordan Downs Recreation Center, 3) Mudtown Farms 4) David Starr Jordan High School, and 5) Annexation Area.

Jordan Downs Public Housing Complex. The Jordan Downs Public housing complex was originally developed as semi-permanent housing for industry defense workers and World War II workers. HACLA converted these worker residences to public housing in the early 1950s, as one of the last public housing complexes to open in Los Angeles. The public housing complex property is approximately 49.5 acres and includes 700 residential units in attached two-story, townhouse-style buildings. The 400 residential units located between 97th Street and 99th Place were constructed in 1943 and converted to public housing in the early 1950s. An additional 300 units were added to the south of the 400 units in 1954. Presently, 2,304 persons reside at Jordan Downs. Photographs of the Jordan Downs Public Housing Complex are shown in **Figure III-2**.



View of the Jordan Downs Public Housing Complex from the recreation center.



View of Jordan Downs residences along Grape Street.



View of the rear entrances of Jordan Downs residences and parking area.



View of the front entrances to Jordan Downs residences and security fencing.

SOURCE: WRT/Soloman E.T.C. and TAHA, 2010.

Jordan Downs Recreation Center. The recreation center, which is operated by the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, is located at 9900 Grape Street and is the main open space for Jordan Downs residents and the surrounding Watts community. The recreation center is generally located in the center of the public housing complex and separates the 400 residences that were originally constructed in 1943 from the 300 residences that were constructed to the south in 1954. The recreation center is approximately 7,000 square feet, and includes a children’s playground, picnic tables, barbecue pits, a baseball field, outdoor basketball courts, an indoor gymnasium, and a teen center.

Mudtown Farms. Mudtown Farms is an approximately 2.5-acre community garden, consisting of 124 plots tended to by 118 local residents, most of whom live in Jordan Downs. Mudtown Farms is located at the southwest corner of the Specific Plan area, at the northeast corner of the intersection of Grape Street and 103rd Street. The community garden is owned by the Trust for Public Land and the Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC).

David Starr Jordan High School. The Jordan High School property, which is owned and managed by the Los Angeles Unified School District, covers approximately 20 acres and is located adjacent to the public housing complex at 2265 East 103rd Street. Currently, 1,164 students attend Jordan High School. The high school can be accessed from 103rd and Alameda Streets.

Figure III-3 presents photographs of the Jordan Downs Recreation Center, Mudtown Farms, and Jordan High School.

Annexation Area. The annexation area consists of approximately 41.74 acres and includes the following properties: 1) three parcels of land totaling approximately 21.08 acres that HACLA owns adjacent to the public housing complex, 2) all of the publicly- and privately- owned parcels along Alameda Street between 97th and 103rd Streets (14.95 acres), and 3) right-of-way parcels (5.71 acres). Figure II-2 in Section II Project Description, shows the location of the annexation area relative to the entire Specific Plan area. Photographs of the annexation area properties are provided in **Figure III-4**.

The 21.08-acre HACLA owned property is currently vacant with an abandoned steel mill structure located in the northwest corner. A truck driving training school will temporarily occupy the southeast corner of this property until construction of the proposed project begins. The truck driving school will consist of a temporary building, above-ground planter boxes, a parking lot, and above-ground utilities.

The LAUSD-owned parcel fronting Alameda Street is approximately 3.36 acres and is currently occupied by a number of temporary school buildings, a gymnasium, and a surface parking lot. This parcel separates two groupings of privately-owned properties occupied with industrial uses. The industrial parcels to the north of the LAUSD-owned parcel are currently developed with two structures and a storage yard that is occupied by a metal recycling company. The industrial parcels to the south are currently occupied by three light industrial structures with associated yards and parking areas.

B. RELATED PROJECTS

CEQA requires that Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) analyze cumulative impacts. CEQA Guidelines Section 15355 defines cumulative impacts as “two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts.” In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(b) indicates that the analysis of cumulative impacts need not be as in-depth as what is provided relative to the proposed project, but instead is to “be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness.”



View of David Starr Jordan High School from 103rd Street.



View of Jordan Downs Recreation Center.



View of Jordan Downs Recreation Center playground, basketball courts, and picnic tables.



View of Mudtown Farms from 102nd Street.

SOURCE: TAHA, 2010.



View of abandoned steel mill on the 21-acre HACLA-owned property.



View of the privately-owned properties (Atlas Iron & Metal Co.) from Alameda Street.



View of the privately-owned properties at the southeast corner of the project site from 103rd Street.



View of the LAUSD-owned property from Alameda Street.

SOURCE: WRT/Soloman E.T.C. and TAHA, 2010.

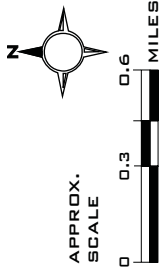
An adequate discussion of significant cumulative impacts can be accomplished by analyzing either (1) “a list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency” or (2) “a summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document, or in a prior environmental document which has been adopted or certified, which described or evaluated regional or areawide conditions contributing to the cumulative impact.”¹ For purposes of this project-specific EIR, the list-based approach was determined to be the most accurate and realistic method to assess cumulative impacts.

The list of related projects shown in **Table III-1** was compiled from the cities of Los Angeles, Lynwood, and South Gate, and the County of Los Angeles. Nine planned projects are located within a mile and a half of the Specific Plan area and their locations are depicted in **Figure III-5**. These projects include specific proposals for which applications have been submitted and encompass an area most relevant to the environmental impacts of the proposed project (traffic impact study area, utilities, etc.) that could potentially compound those individual project impacts addressed in this Draft EIR. The list of projects is considered to be representative of worst-case conditions as not all of the listed projects will ultimately be constructed, and those projects that are built will be subject to mitigation measures and conditions of approval not known at this time. Additionally, not all of the identified projects will compound the specific impacts of the proposed project.

TABLE III-1: RELATED PROJECTS				
Key to Figure III-5	Location	Jurisdiction	Land Use	Size
1	10341 Graham Ave, Los Angeles	City of Los Angeles	Movie Theater	1,040 Seats
			Educational Center	12,000 Sq. Ft.
2	11300 Monitor Ave, Los Angeles	City of Los Angeles	High School	500 Students
3	The Gateway in South Gate: located at the intersection of Atlantic Avenue and Firestone Boulevard in South Gate.	City of South Gate	Shopping Center	600,000 Sq. Ft.
4.	Atlantic Park Plaza: located at the corner of Atlantic Avenue and Tweedy Boulevard in South Gate.	City of South Gate	Shopping Center	50,000 Sq. Ft.
5	Firestone Village and Shops: located at 3125 Firestone Boulevard in South Gate.	City of South Gate	Specialty Retail Center	18,090 Sq. Ft.
			Residential Condo/Townhouse	47 Units
6	East Los Angeles College (ELAC) Firestone campus – located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Santa Fe Avenue at Firestone Boulevard in South Gate.	City of South Gate	Community College	12,000 Students 163 Employees
7	Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Elementary School No. 9 – located on Willow Place between Santa Fe Avenue and Long Beach Boulevard in South Gate.	City of South Gate	Elementary School	650 Students
8	Triangle Project – bounded by Alameda Street, Imperial Highway, and Fernwood Avenue in Lynwood.	City of Lynwood	Single-Family Residential	120 Units
9	Fernwood Estates – located on a redevelopment agency-owned property adjacent to the I-105 freeway in Lynwood.	City of Lynwood	Single-Family Residential	30 Units

SOURCE: Iteris. *Jordan Downs Specific Plan Traffic Impact Study*, September 2010.

¹CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(b)(1).



LEGEND:
 [Box symbol] Specific Plan Area
 [# symbol] Related Project, Refer to Related Projects listed in Table III-1
 SOURCE: Iteris, 2010.

FIGURE III-5
RELATED PROJECTS