

III. GENERAL OVERVIEW AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

A. OVERVIEW OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

1. GEOGRAPHIC SETTING AND ACCESS

The Project Site is located in the Sherman Oaks-Studio City-Toluca Lake-Cahuenga Pass Community Plan (the “Community Plan”) Area within the Studio City portion of the City of Los Angeles (the “City”), generally in the southeastern portion of the San Fernando Valley. The Project Site is approximately 11 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles and 11 miles northeast of the Pacific Ocean at Pacific Palisades (see *Figure II-1: Regional Location*, provided in *Section II: Project Description*).

The Project area is served by the Ventura Freeway (US-101), located approximately 0.8 miles to the north of the Project Site. Regional access to the Project Site is provided by several major roadways including Whitsett Avenue (along the eastern Project Site boundary), Moorpark Street (0.3 miles to the north), Coldwater Canyon Avenue (0.4 miles to the west), and Ventura Boulevard (0.2 miles to the south).

The roughly triangularly shaped Project Site is located generally northwest of the intersection of Whitsett Avenue and Ventura Boulevard and is bounded by Valley Spring Lane to the north, Bellaire Avenue to the west, an approximately 150-foot wide right-of-way of the Los Angeles River to the south, and Whitsett Avenue to the east (see *Figure II-2: Local Vicinity* provided in *Section II: Project Description*). It should be noted that the approximately 1.1-acre parcel adjacent to the southeast corner of the Project Site and currently occupied with a City of Los Angeles fire station, is no longer part of the Project Site and is not a part of the current Project. A 40- to 50-foot wide right-of-way for Valleyheart Drive exists directly to the south of the Property, adjacent and parallel to the L.A. River right-of-way.

The Project Site is located on a relatively flat parcel that slopes (downgrade) gently to the southeast and is at an elevation of approximately 640 feet above sea level.

2. EXISTING DEVELOPMENT AND SURROUNDING LAND USES

The Studio City area is recognized for its collection of production and post-production businesses serving the movie and television entertainment industry. Properties located along Ventura Boulevard are developed with a mix of pedestrian-oriented retail storefronts and office structures. A portion of the Los Angeles River runs through Studio City.

The Project Site vicinity would be described as urban and developed, characterized by single- and multi-family housing, commercial uses, parking lots, and a well-established street system. Properties adjacent to the Project Site include single-family residential dwellings along Valley Spring Lane and Bellaire Avenue to the north and west, respectively; multi-family residential dwellings along Whitsett Avenue to the east; and the Los Angeles River and commercial uses along Ventura Boulevard to the south (see *Figure II-3: Aerial Overview and Surrounding Uses*, provided in *Section II: Project Description*).

A 1.1-acre parcel of land adjacent to the southeast corner of the Project Site is occupied by Los Angeles Fire Station No. 78 and also zoned A1-1XL. This parcel was split from the Project Site and acquired by the City of Los Angeles in 2005 and is neither under the ownership of the Applicant nor a part of the proposed Project. Besides the fire station and the L.A. River, properties surrounding the Project Site are within the R3-1 or R1-1 Zones and are characterized by level topography and improved streets. The L.A. River right-of-way is currently designated as Public Open Space (OS). The commercial properties just south of the L.A. River on Ventura Boulevard are zoned Limited Commercial (C1.5).

The existing triangular Project Site totals approximately 16.1 acres and is currently occupied by a pitch-and-putt golf course, driving range, clubhouse, and tennis court facilities. The existing Weddington Golf Course occupies roughly 10.2 acres on the northerly portion of the Project Site. The pitch-and-putt golf course is a nine-hole, par-three course located primarily along Valley Spring Lane and Bellaire Avenue. The golf course also includes a clubhouse with a snack bar-type restaurant, and a driving range. The driving range is located in the central area of the Project Site and includes 24 tee stations. The tennis courts occupy roughly 5.9 acres on the southerly portion of the Project Site. A total of 16 tennis courts are currently provided along with related facilities including a small tennis house for equipment and other tennis related services. It should be noted that the existing tennis courts and related facilities would be removed to accommodate the proposed Project.

The primary parking for the existing uses on the Project Site is located along Whitsett Avenue, stretching between the driving range and tennis courts. Access to the surface parking lot is provided via two driveways along the Whitsett Avenue property frontage. A small service driveway is also provided on Valley Spring Lane, immediately west of Whitsett Avenue.

3. PHYSICAL SITE CHARACTERISTICS

The Property is a triangular-shaped lot with an area of approximately 16.1 acres. The Property is zoned A1-1XL (Agricultural) with an Open Space land use designation, and is currently improved with a privately operated 9-hole pitch-and-putt golf course, driving range, clubhouse, tennis courts, and associated parking, collectively known as Weddington Golf and Tennis.

The Project area, being fully urbanized, is fully serviced for all public utilities and public services. Electricity and water at the Project Site are currently provided by the City of Los Angeles, Department of Water and Power (the "LADWP"). Natural gas at the Project Site is currently provided by the Southern California Gas Company (the "Gas Company"). The Project Site is located within the Hyperion Water Treatment Plant (the "HWTP") Service Area.

A comprehensive discussion of the specific setting for each physical environmental issue area is provided in the impact analysis chapters of this Draft EIR.

4. LAND USE AND PLANNING CONTEXT

The Project Site is located within the Sherman Oaks-Studio City-Toluca Lake-Cahuenga Pass Community Plan Area (update adopted May 13, 1998) within the City of Los Angeles. The intent of the Sherman Oaks-Studio City-Toluca Lake-Cahuenga Pass Community Plan is to guide development and land use in the Community Plan Area in order to create a healthful and pleasant environment.¹ The Community Plan Area is bounded by the communities of North Hollywood and Van Nuys-North Sherman Oaks to the north; Hollywood, Universal City, and portions of the City of Burbank to the east, Encino-Tarzana to the west and Beverly Crest-Bel Air to the south. The area comprises five community subareas: Cahuenga Pass, Campo de Cahuenga Transit Station, Studio City, Sherman Oaks, and Toluca Lake.

The Project Site is within the Studio City subarea. According to the Community Plan:

“Studio City with its collection of production and post production businesses contains the majority of industrially zoned properties found within the plan area, is generally bounded by Lankershim on the east and Fulton on the west. With its expansion to the northerly 11.5 acre portion of their site approved under ZA Case No. 94-0292 (CUZ), CBS Studio Center, a major employer in the area, is the tenant of the largest industrial site. Properties located along Ventura Boulevard are developed with a mix of pedestrian oriented storefronts and office structures. Laurel Canyon Boulevard serves as the focal point of Studio City with its intense commercial development at the respective four corners. A portion of the L.A. River runs through Studio City. In keeping with the vision stated by residents during citywide workshops, and community plan update focus group meetings, the west side of Laurel Canyon, north of Ventura Boulevard could be developed with a Village concept accented toward the river.”

The need to provide affordable senior housing within the Community Plan Area is identified as a key issue in the Plan. Further, the Community Plan identifies the Project Site as a “major development opportunity site, as follows (emphasis added):

“Several areas have been identified as major opportunity sites: Properties located along the south side of the Los Angeles River between Coldwater Canyon and Laurel Canyon; Transit Station site along Lankershim Boulevard, north of Ventura boulevard, adjacent to Universal City; *the Studio City Golf Course*; and, CBS Studios. Additionally, the properties located on the westerly side of Sepulveda Boulevard (including the Sherman Oaks Galleria) from the 101 Freeway to Valley Vista Boulevard. The designation has been applied to areas which will potentially generate significant community wide impacts.”

The Community Plan designates Valley Spring Lane and Bellaire Avenue as local streets and Whitsett Avenue as a secondary roadway.

¹ Los Angeles, City of. 1998 (as updated). *Sherman Oaks-Studio City-Toluca Lake-Cahuenga Pass Community Plan*. 5 September 2008 <<http://cityplanning.lacity.org/complan/pdf/shrcptxt.pdf>>.

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B. RELATED PROJECTS

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines, requires that EIRs analyze cumulative impacts of a project. The analysis of cumulative impacts need not be as in-depth as what is provided relative to the proposed Project, but rather is to “be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness.” CEQA Guidelines Section 15355 further defines cumulative impacts as “two or more individual projects, which when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase the environmental impacts.”

Cumulative impacts are anticipated impacts of the Project along with foreseeable growth. The forecast of future conditions is clarified in Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines. Specifically, the CEQA Guidelines provide that foreseeable growth may be based on either of the following:

- (A) A list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the [lead] agency, or
- (B) 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. Any such planning document shall be referenced and made available to the public at a location specified by the lead agency.

The analysis of cumulative impacts may be based on an analysis of the geographical area that is relevant to a particular environmental issue. Hence, the cumulative study area may vary slightly depending on the issue under analysis. For example, a cumulative assessment of visual impacts will generally focus on the more immediate surrounding area, while traffic impacts may consider a broader range of roadways that may be used by the Project.

For purposes of the Project, a list of potential Related Projects, which are generally representative of foreseeable growth was developed in coordination with the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (“LADOT”) and the Planning Department. The Related Projects research was based on information on file as of December 2011 at the City of Los Angeles Departments of Planning and Transportation. The location of the Related Projects is shown in *Figure III-1: Location of Related Projects*. The list of Related Projects in the Project area is presented in *Table III-1: List of Related Projects*. The list of Related Projects was submitted to LADOT for review and approval as part of the Traffic Impact Study on February 9, 2012.

The Related Projects listed are considered, to the extent that they are appropriate and relevant in the context of incremental impacts of the Project, in the cumulative impact analysis of each environmental issue evaluated in this Draft EIR.

TABLE III-1
LIST OF RELATED PROJECTS¹

MAP NO.	FILE PROJECT NUMBER	PROJECT NAME/NUMBER ADDRESS/LOCATION	LAND USE	SIZE ²	STATUS
LA1	VEN-2010-020	12548 Ventura Boulevard	Apartment Retail Existing Retail Other	62 DU 10,747 GLSF (3,000) GLSF 1,925 GSF	Proposed
LA2	VEN-2008-080	Credit Union 4061 Laurel Canyon Boulevard	Walk-In Bank	1,467 GSF	Proposed
LA3	SFV-2004-294	Campbell Hall School 4533 Laurel Canyon Boulevard	Private School (K-12) Existing Senior Housing Existing Apartment	400 Students (54) DU (22) DU	Under Construction
LA4	SFV-2006-130	Sherman Village 12629 Riverside Drive	Condominium TV program production	270 DU	Approved
LA5	VEN-2004-008	11617 Ventura Boulevard	Apartment Existing Office Coffee House Existing Retail Existing Car Service Existing Restaurant	391 DU (7,793) GSF 1,000 GSF (5,598) GSF (4,065) GSF (4,000) GSF	Inactive
LA6	SFV-2006-044	Meridian Evangelical School 13330 Riverside Drive	Private High School	383 Students	Approved
LA7	SFV-2011-025	11422 Moorpark Street	Restaurant	124 Seats	Proposed
LA8	VEN-2006-018	11331 Ventura Boulevard	Condominium Office	62 DU (21,694) GSF	Proposed
LA9	SFV-2007-032	Aqua Vista Condos 11163 Aqua Vista Street	Condominium	122 DU	Under Construction
LA10	VEN-2009-014	Ralph's Supermarket 14049 Ventura Boulevard	Supermarket Expansion	27,389 GSF	Approved

¹ Source: City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation Related Project List, excepted as noted below. Trip generation for the Related Projects are based on "ITE 'Trip Generation', 8th Edition, 2008.

² A number in parenthesis (i.e., "(3,000) GLSF" or "(54) DU") indicates removal of that use from the Related Project site.

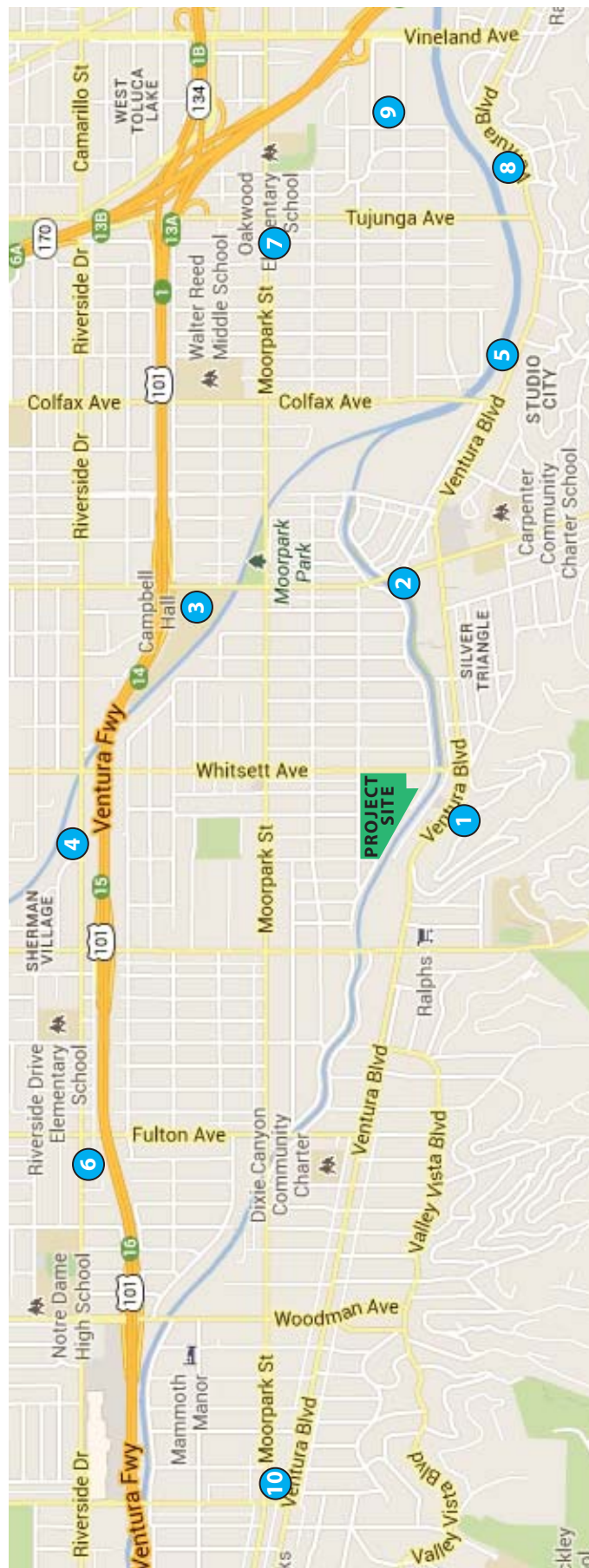


FIGURE III-1
LOCATION OF RELATED PROJECTS

SOURCE: MAPS.GOOGLE.COM

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C. PROJECT BASELINE

“Baseline” refers to the environmental setting conditions that establish the background against which a project is compared. The CEQA Guidelines Section 15125 establishes that a project’s environmental baseline is typically established by the physical conditions that exist within the project area at the time the Lead Agency issues the NOP (i.e., at the beginning of the environmental review). However, the Lead Agency has some discretion in defining the baseline when supported by substantial evidence of the administrative record. For example, the Lead Agency may recognize a “credit” for conditions that may already exist but would be replaced by a project, or for conditions that may not actually exist (at the time of the project’s environmental review) but have been previously approved, and in theory, could be undertaken without further discretionary permits.

The Project’s baseline is established as a combination of the current existing physical conditions near the period of March 2008 (as updated through 2013) and projected future conditions for build-out year 2016. For this EIR analysis, the baseline is adjusted accordingly to account for the removal of sixteen (16) tennis courts to be replaced by senior housing, and thus allowing for an acceptable background “credit” for the Project and/or establishing the “net” incremental effect of the Project is discussed in *Section IV: Environmental Impact Analysis* of this Draft EIR.