

CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

This environmental impact report (EIR) for the proposed Stadium Reconstruction Project (Project) has been prepared in accordance with, and complies with, all criteria, standards, and procedures of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970 as amended (Public Resources Code [PRC] §21000 et seq.), CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, §15000 et seq.), and City of San Diego’s EIR Preparation Guidelines. Per Section 21067 of CEQA and Sections 15367 and 15050 through 15053 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the City of San Diego is the lead agency under whose authority this document has been prepared. As an informational document, this EIR is intended for use by the City of San Diego decision makers and members of the general public in evaluating the potential environmental effects of the Project.

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS – CEQA COMPLIANCE

An EIR is an informational document used by a lead agency (in this case, the City of San Diego) when considering approval of a project. The purpose of an EIR is to provide public agencies and members of the general public with detailed information concerning the environmental effects associated with the implementation of a project. An EIR should analyze the environmental consequences of a project, identify ways to reduce or avoid potential environmental effects resulting from the project, and identify alternatives to the project that are capable of avoiding or reducing impacts. CEQA requires that all state and local government agencies consider the environmental consequences of projects over which they have discretionary authority. This EIR provides information to be used in the planning and decision-making process. It is not the purpose of an EIR to recommend approval or denial of a project.

Prior to approval of the Project, the City, as lead agency and the decision-making entity, is required to certify that the EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, that the information in this EIR has been considered, and that the EIR reflects the independent judgment of the City. CEQA requires decision makers to balance the benefits of a project against its unavoidable environmental consequences. If environmental impacts are identified as significant and unavoidable, the City may still approve the project if it finds that social, economic, or other benefits outweigh the unavoidable impacts. The City would then be required to state in writing the specific reasons for approving the Project based on information in the EIR and other

information sources in the administrative record. This reasoning is called a “statement of overriding considerations” (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21081 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15093).

In addition, the City as lead agency must adopt a mitigation monitoring and reporting program (MMRP) describing the measures that were made a condition of project approval in order to avoid or mitigate significant effects on the environment (PRC Section 21081.6; CEQA Guidelines Section 15097). The MMRP is adopted at the time of project approval and is designed to ensure compliance with the project description and mitigation measures of the EIR during and after project implementation. If the City decides to approve the Project, it would be responsible for verifying that implementation of the MMRP for this Project occurs.

The EIR would primarily be used by the City during approval of future discretionary actions and permits.

1.3 PURPOSE AND LEGAL AUTHORITY

Notice of Preparation and Scoping Meeting

Consistent with the requirements of CEQA, a good faith effort has been made during the preparation of the EIR to contact all responsible and trustee agencies; organizations; persons who may have an interest in the Project; and all government agencies, including the State Clearinghouse. This includes the circulation of a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on June 22, 2015, which began a 30-day comment period that ended on July 21, 2015. A total of 38 comment letters were received on the NOP during this time and were considered in preparation of the EIR. The comments included the following issues:

- Land sale and mixed-use development
- Stadium financing
- Traffic and parking
- Multimodal transportation
- Infrastructure improvements
- San Diego River Park and park lands
- Contamination and health risks
- Noise
- Air quality and greenhouse gases
- Biology
- Storm water, flooding, and wetlands
- Energy
- Serra Mesa Community
- Notice of Preparation
- Project description
- Visual impacts
- Cumulative impacts
- Environmental baseline
- Alternatives

The NOP and comment letters are included in this document as Appendix A.

A scoping meeting was held on July 15, 2015, starting at 6:00 p.m. at Qualcomm Stadium, to inform the public about the Project and receive comments. Two individuals spoke at the scoping meeting. The issues they raised included financing, wildlife corridors, flooding, redevelopment, and stadium design impacts to birds.

In reviewing the Project, the City determined that it could result in potentially significant environmental impacts based on the City's current Significance Determination Thresholds (last revised January 2014). Through this process, the City identified potentially significant environmental impacts associated with the following issues:

- Air Quality and Odor
- Aesthetic/Visual
- Archeological/Historical Resources
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Geologic/Seismic
- Noise
- Land Use
- Public Services and Facilities
- Toxic/Hazardous
- Transportation/Circulation
- Biology
- Greenhouse Gases

Public Review

The City filed a Notice of Completion with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse, indicating that this EIR has been completed and is available for review. A Notice of Availability of the EIR has been published concurrently with distribution of this document. This EIR is being circulated for a 45-day public review and comment period. During this period, comments from the general public, organizations, and agencies regarding environmental issues identified in the EIR and concerning the EIR's accuracy and completeness may be submitted to the lead agency at the following address:

Martha Blake
City of San Diego, Development Services Department
1222 1st Avenue, MS 501
San Diego, CA 92101

or

DSDEAS@sandiego.gov

In addition, the draft EIR and all related technical appendices are/were made available for review during the public review period in the offices of the Development Services Department at 1222

1st Avenue, San Diego, CA 92101 and a notice was placed on the City of San Diego website at <http://www.sandiego.gov/city-clerk/officialdocs/notices/index.shtml> under the “California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Notices & Documents” section. Copies of the draft environmental document were also available at the following locations:

Mission Valley Branch Library
2123 Fenton Parkway
San Diego, CA 920108

San Diego Public Library
Central Library
330 Park Boulevard
San Diego, CA 92101

Allied Gardens/Navajo Branch Library
5188 Zion Avenue
San Diego, CA 92120

Kensington/Normal Heights Branch Library
4121 Adams Avenue
San Diego, CA 92116

Serra Mesa Branch Library
9005 Aero Drive
San Diego, CA 92123

Tierrasanta Branch Library
4985 La Cuenta Drive
San Diego, CA 92124

Comments may be made on the EIR in writing before the end of the comment period. The City will prepare written responses to comments made in writing. Upon completion of the public review period, a Final EIR will be prepared and will include the comments on the EIR received during the formal public review period and responses to those comments.

1.4 SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF THE EIR

This EIR addresses the potential environmental impacts of the proposed construction of a new stadium and demolition of the existing Qualcomm Stadium, on the approximately 166-acre site

located in the Mission Valley community in San Diego County, California. The Project site is owned and under local land use jurisdiction of the City.

The new stadium would have a maximum normal capacity of up to 68,000 seats. However, it would be designed to allow for expansion within the stadium footprint to approximately 72,000 seats for special events such as a National Football League (NFL) Super Bowl. The structure would consist of approximately 1.75 million square feet, with a structure footprint of approximately 750,000 square feet. The stadium would have a maximum height of 250 feet above ground level, which includes stadium lights and architectural features on the top of the structure.

Consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15161, this EIR contains an analysis of the changes in the environment that could result from the planning, construction, and operation of the Project described in more detail in Chapter 3.0, Project Description. The EIR contains the following chapters:

Executive Summary. This section summarizes the environmental consequences that would result from the Project, provides a summary table that lists the Project's anticipated significant environmental impacts, describes recommended mitigation measures, and indicates the level of significance of impacts after implementation of recommended mitigation measures.

Chapter 1.0: Introduction. This chapter provides an introduction and overview of the Project and describes the purpose of the EIR and the CEQA process.

Chapter 2.0: Environmental Setting. This chapter describes the existing Project site conditions and land uses on the Project site, City of San Diego General Plan, Mission Valley Community Plan designations and Planned District Ordinance, existing zoning, and the San Diego River Park Master Plan, and Regional Plans.

Chapter 3.0: Project Description. This chapter details the Project components, including the Project's purpose and objectives, Project features, anticipated program development and necessary discretionary permits required for implementation of the Project.

Chapter 4.0: Environmental Impacts. This chapter describes the existing conditions for each of the environmental topics, states the environmental issues identified for the Project by the City, and evaluates the potential significant environmental impacts of the Project and recommended mitigation measures to avoid or reduce the significance of potential impacts.

Chapter 5.0: Cumulative Impacts. This chapter analyzes the potential significant Project effects that, when considered with other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, could compound or increase environmental impacts.

Chapter 6.0: Effects Found Not to Be Significant. This chapter analyzes potential environmental effects identified by the City that, after detailed analysis, were determined not to be significant. This section also provides an analysis on growth inducing impacts of the Project, such as the ways in which the Project could foster economic or population growth, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding area.

Chapter 7.0: Mandatory Discussion Areas. This chapter identifies the changes in the local environment that would result from implementation of the Project, and analyzes potential environmental effects identified by the City that, after detailed analysis, were determined unavoidable if the Project is implemented.

Chapter 8.0: Alternatives to the Project. This chapter considers alternatives to the Project that could reduce one or more of the significant environmental impacts identified in Chapter 4. In addition, alternatives that were considered but rejected from more detailed analysis are also identified.

Chapter 9.0: Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP). CEQA requires that this chapter list all the mitigation measures required to be implemented by the Project, the entity required to monitor the satisfactory completion of the MMRP, and at what point in the process the mitigation measures are to be accomplished.

Chapter 10.0: References. This chapter provides a list of the sources referenced in the EIR.

Chapter 11.0: Preparers of the Environmental Document. This chapter identifies the persons and organizations that participated in the preparation of the EIR.

Appendices: The NOP/scoping comment letters and EIR technical studies that were prepared for the Project are provided in the Appendices for public review.