

III. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Section 15125 of the CEQA Guidelines requires an EIR to include a description of the physical environmental conditions at the time the Notice of Preparation is published, and states this environmental setting normally constitutes the baseline physical condition used to determine if an impact is significant.

1. LOCATION

The City of Long Beach occupies the southernmost portion of Los Angeles County. The City is bordered by the cities of Carson and Los Angeles to the west, Paramount and Lakewood to the north, and Los Alamitos and Seal Beach to the east. The City also surrounds the City of Signal Hill on all sides in its central area. The Pacific Ocean abuts the City's southern border.

The Project Site is associated with the address of 701 and 712 W Baker Street as well as 3501, 3539, 3701, and 3801 Golden Avenue in Long Beach. The Project Site is located near the western edge of the City of Long Beach, south of the San Diego (I-405) Freeway and east of the Long Beach Freeway (I-710) and Los Angeles River. The Project Site is bounded by W. Wardlow Road on the south, Golden Avenue on the east, I-405 to the north, and County-owned open space bordering the Los Angeles River (LA River) to the west. Regional access is provided by both the I-405 and I-710 Freeways. West of the Project Site, Wardlow Road is connected to the I-710 north onramp and I-710 south offramp.

2. EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

The Project Site is vacant with the edges fenced off with a mix of chain link fences, wooden fences, and hedges. Access to the Project Site is currently secured by chain link fence gates and padlocks. Previous uses, described below have been abandoned and removed though some old foundations, roads, and pipes are still present on the site. Non-native tree species, notably eucalyptus species, Peruvian and Brazilian Pepper, and California and Canary Island Palm Trees are present on the Site. Native plant species of blue elderberry, mulefat, whiteflowered nightshade, saltwort, and telegraph weed, were also observed. Elevations on the Site range from 20 to 40 feet, with a general down slope toward the west and three excavated depressions in the center of the Site.

For over 50 years during the 20th century, the Project Site was used for the treatment of oil field production brines and other fluid by-products generated during oil production activities. This process occurred in settling excavated basins and also in concrete-walled skimming basins with associated pumps, above ground storage tanks (ASTs), and associated structures. This operation was terminated and for the past 20 years remediation of residual oil on the site has been ongoing, with oversight by the City of Long Beach and the State of California Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board.

3. SURROUNDINGS LAND USES

The Project site is bounded by I-405 on the north, Golden Avenue on the east, the Los Angeles River on the west and Wardlow Road on the south. Land uses surrounding the Project site are mostly residential or roadway and river. To the east are detached single-family condominium units and single-family detached homes in the Wrigley Heights neighborhood. The west is the channelized LA River bordered by a County-owned open space corridor. To the north is the 405 freeway beyond which is vacant industrial land and the Los Cerritos residential neighborhood. To the south of Wardlow Road is the North Wrigley residential neighborhood.

The existing neighborhood Baker Street park at Baker Street & Golden Avenue is located adjacent to the northeast corner of the Project. There also a public dog park on the north side of Wardlow Road, adjacent to the southeast corner of the Project Site.

The Project is located immediately east of the LA River, which provides a walking path adjacent to the eastern edge of the river for which there is a pedestrian entrance at the northwestern corner of De Forest Avenue and West 34th Street, located south of Wardlow Road. There is also an existing, unpaved, informal pedestrian path connecting the end of Baker Street with the LA River walking path.

Regional access to the site is provided by Interstate 405 (I-405) and Interstate 710 (I-710). Local access to the site is provided by Wardlow Road and Magnolia Avenue.

Long Beach Transit (LBT) and LA Metro provide public transit services in the vicinity of the proposed Project site. There is a bus stop at the corner of Magnolia Avenue and Wardlow Road and a Metro rail station is located at Wardlow Road and Pacific Place.

3. APPLICABLE REGIONAL AND LOCAL PLANS

Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)

SCAG is the authorized regional agency for intergovernmental review of programs proposed for federal financial assistance and direct development activities. SCAG consists of local governments from six counties including Los Angeles, Ventura, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Imperial counties. These six counties encompasses 191 cities in the region. SCAG is also responsible for the designated Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), including its Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) component pursuant to SB 375. The 2020-2045 RTP/SCS, also known as Connect SoCal, was adopted by SCAG on September 3, 2020. The 2020–2045 RTP/SCS is a long-range visioning plan that builds upon and expands land use and transportation strategies established over several planning cycles to increase mobility options and achieve a more sustainable growth pattern.

Update of the 2020-2045 RTP/SCS reflects changes in economic, policy, and demographic conditions in the region.¹ In the SCAG region, annual growth is slowing down in concert with the national population growth trend. It is anticipated that population growth in the region will slow down from about 0.85 percent in 2020 to about 0.45 percent by 2045. These changes are driven by declines in fertility and affected by high housing costs in the region. The population in the region is also growing older, with a median age of 32.3 in 2000 to 35.8 in 2016. By 2045, the median age is expected to reach 39.7. Net migration to the region has also slowed over the last 30 years.

In terms of housing, new housing production within the SCAG region has accelerated since the recession with over 40,000 new units permitted each year from 2015 to 2018. This is an increase above the 15,000 annual permits after the 2008 recession but still below the average of 80,000 new units permitted annually during the housing boom from 2002 to 2006.

Long Beach General Plan

The Project Site is designated Land Use District (LUD) No. 20, Founding and Contemporary Neighborhood (FCN) PlaceType in the City's 2040 General Plan. The FCN PlaceType allows single-family residential, two-family residential, mobile homes, institutional, and park uses, as well as public right-of-way. Planned developments are also allowed. The Land Use Element and the Urban Design Element of the General Plan include design guidelines and standards to encourage new developments with appropriate scale and massing in relation to its neighborhood context.²

Zoning Code

The Project Site is zoned for Commercial Storage (CS) and Single-Family Residential Standard Lot (R-1-N) use, with the properties along Golden Avenue situated within the Horse Overlay District (H). The Horse Overlay District was established to form uniform regulations, safeguards and controls for keeping and maintaining horses within the City. The overlay district must be used in conjunction with an underlying use district. The CS zone serves as the underlying district at the Project location and is intended to permit storage uses in areas which are particularly difficult to use due to parcel shape, access, adverse environmental conditions, or in areas where parcels are needed to form a buffer from incompatible uses.³

1 Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), 2020-2045 Connect SoCal [2020 RTP/SCS] (adopted November 2019).

2 City of Long Beach. 2016 Land Use Element and Urban Design Element.
<https://www.longbeach.gov/lbds/planning/initiatives--programs/long-beach-2040-general-plan/>.

3 City of Long Beach. Long Beach Municipal Code. Title 21- Zoning. Chapter 21.32- Commercial Districts.
https://library.municode.com/ca/long_beach/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT21ZO_CH21.32CODI. Accessed March 25, 2020.

4. RELATED PROJECTS

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines states that cumulative impacts shall be discussed where they are significant. It further states that this discussion shall reflect the level and severity of the impact and the likelihood of occurrence, but not in as great a level of detail as that necessary for the project alone. Section 15355 of the Guidelines defines cumulative impacts as "...two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts." Cumulative impacts represent the change caused by the incremental impact of a project when added to other proposed or committed projects in the vicinity.

The CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(b)(1) states that the information utilized in an analysis of cumulative impacts should come from either a list of past, present and probable future projects producing related cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency; a summary of projections contained in an adopted General Plan or related planning document designed to evaluate regional or area-wide conditions.

The cumulative impact analyses in this DEIR use a combined Method A and B. Generally, the growth projections that are identified in the current Long Beach General Plan (and other long-range planning documents where necessary, such as SCAG's RTP/SCS) have been utilized.

Some impacts are site specific; however, several of the environmental topic areas consider a larger area to determine cumulative impacts, such as air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, hydrology and water quality, noise, and transportation. The cumulative study area, methodology, and impacts for each environmental impact category are discussed separately under each environmental topic in this DEIR.

In coordination with the City, two proposed development projects were identified for inclusion in the opening year analysis. A four-story, mixed-use 35,000 square-foot office building is planned for 3435 Long Beach Boulevard, east of the Project. Additionally, the proposed self-storage and RV storage facility at 3701 Pacific Place. This related project will construct a 150,000-gross-squarefoot building with 1,100 self-storage units and 580 RV storage spaces on the currently vacant property.