

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1-1 VALLEY COLLEGE INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

Los Angeles Valley College is a 2-year community college accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and one of nine community colleges that form the Los Angeles Community College District (District). The College offers both an Associate in Arts Degree and an Associate in Science Degree as well as occupational career certificates. The primary service area for Los Angeles Valley College is comprised of the communities of Van Nuys, North Hollywood, Panorama City, Arleta, Sun Valley, Sherman Oaks, Pacoima, and Valley Village. Approximately 50 percent of the students at the College reside in zip codes from these communities.

Los Angeles Valley College was originally established in 1949 on the campus of Van Nuys High School in the San Fernando Valley area of Los Angeles. The College was created to meet the educational needs of the local area, specifically to address the tremendous growth of the San Fernando Valley during the 1940s and 1950s. Original enrollment at the College was 439 students. Valley College moved to its current 105-acre location on Fulton Avenue in Van Nuys in 1951.

Total enrollment at the College has varied substantially over the years. In 1975, total enrollment peaked at 24,167 students. In the fall 2001 semester there was a total of 18,487 students enrolled at the College. Approximately 76 percent of the 18,487 students were part-time students and 24 percent were full-time students. There were an estimated 19,309 students enrolled at Valley College in the fall 2002 semester. During the 2001-2002 academic year, there were 14,154 full-time-equivalent (FTE)¹ students enrolled at the College. The estimated number of FTE students for the 2002-2003 academic year is 13,393. As of the fall 2002 semester, there were 324 FTE employed staff members at Valley College.

Valley College strives to be the center of influence for education, personal development, lifelong learning, cultural activities, and career training in the San Fernando Valley. The College offers transfer, vocational, general, transitional, and adult education programs in an atmosphere that fosters the free and respectful exchange of ideas. It is the College's mission to provide educational programs and services emphasizing critical thinking, cultural awareness, intellectual development, physical well-being, self-direction, and social responsibility. In addition, as the educational focal point for the San Fernando Valley, the College provides vision, opportunity, and leadership for the cultural and economic growth of a changing and diverse community.

¹ To determine the number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) students, the District calculates the total number of instructional hours for all of the enrollments and divides by 525 hours, which is roughly the number of instructional hours of one student taking five 3-unit classes for two primary terms. Instructional hours are based on enrollments on a census date and hours are counted differently for full-term and short-term classes. Some courses require reporting of actual hours of attendance only.

Valley College offers classes for the academic year during fall and spring semesters. The College also offers classes during 5-week winter and summer sessions. The most recent spring semester began on February 10, 2003, and concluded on June 8, 2003. The fall semester 2003 will begin on September 2, 2003, and will conclude on December 20, 2003.

During the academic semesters, most classes are offered during the day and evening, Monday through Friday, from 6:30 a.m. through 10:00 p.m. Classes are also held on weekends.

1-2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE FACILITIES MASTER PLAN

In October 2000, the Master Plan Committee for Los Angeles Valley College began a 2-year planning effort with consultants, faculty, and staff to create the Los Angeles Valley College Facilities Master Plan 2002, which consisted of a Facilities Master Plan and an Educational Master Plan. The Master Plan was developed to assist Los Angeles Valley College in planning to meet the educational needs of an increasingly diverse population with increasingly complex educational needs. The process involved forming the Facilities Master Planning Advisory Group; conducting surveys of student opinions; conducting studies on enrollment; interviewing faculty and staff representatives of each of the 57 disciplines and services; touring and documenting the campus; and conferring with the District Program Manager (DMJM/JGM) and the College Project Manager (URS). Subsequent to completion of the Master Plan 2002, further refinements to the Facilities Master Plan were made in consultation with members of the College community.² The revised and refined Facilities Master Plan that was developed provided the basic project description for this Environmental Impact Report. The Facilities Master Plan details the greatest amount of new construction, renovation projects, and demolition that could conceivably occur over approximately the next 5 to 6 years.

1-3 PROPOSITION A BOND MEASURE

Proposition A is a \$1.245 billion facilities bond that is being used to repair, rehabilitate, and modernize facilities at all nine of the District's campuses. Los Angeles voters approved Proposition A on April 10, 2001, by a 67 percent margin, surpassing the 55 percent needed for passage. The District has established a goal of spending \$525 million in the first 36 months on programming, design, and construction for the District's nine campuses.

Proposition A requires that bond revenues be expended only for construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or replacement of college facilities and that no bond revenues be expended for any teacher or administrative salaries or other college operating expenses. To ensure that all Proposition A requirements are met, the District established an independent District Citizens' Oversight Committee, as well as Citizens' Oversight Committees for each of the District's nine

² Subsequent to release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR), further revisions were made to the Facilities Master Plan in response to concerns about the potential impacts of placing the new Library/Learning Resource Center at the south end of the Quadrangle. Please see Chapter 2 of this EIR for a discussion of the Facilities Master Plan revisions.

colleges. The committees are comprised of business, labor, education, student, senior, and community leaders. A Citizens' Oversight Committee has been established for Valley College.

Valley College was allocated \$165 million of the \$1.245 billion bond measure. The \$165 million in Proposition A funding will be used to construct many of the facilities proposed under the Los Angeles Valley College Facilities Master Plan (Master Plan). The completion of other projects envisioned under the Master Plan is contingent upon allocation of additional funding.³

1-4 THE CEQA ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) when there is substantial evidence that a project may have a significant effect on the environment. The purpose of an EIR is to provide decision makers, public agencies, and the general public with an objective and informational document that fully discloses the potential environmental effects of the proposed project. The EIR process is specially designed to facilitate the objective evaluation of potentially significant direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the proposed project; and to identify potentially feasible mitigation measures and alternatives that reduce or avoid the project's significant effects. In addition, CEQA specifically requires that an EIR identify those adverse impacts determined to be significant after mitigation.

The EIR for the Master Plan is a combined Project/Program EIR. A Project EIR is the most common type of EIR and examines the environmental effects of a specific development project. A Program EIR is described in Section 15168 of the *State CEQA Guidelines* as an EIR "which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either geographically, as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions, [or] in connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program..." According to the *State CEQA Guidelines*, a Program EIR can provide the following advantages:

- provide an occasion for a more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives than would be practical in an EIR on an individual action;
- ensure consideration of cumulative impacts that may be slighted on a case-by-case basis;
- avoid duplicative reconsideration of basic policy considerations;
- allow 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 or cumulative impact; and
- allow reduction in paperwork.

³ Proposition AA, which is a \$980 million bond measure to fund critical construction and repairs at all nine colleges in the District, won voter approval on May 20, 2003, with a 64 percent majority vote.

Under CEQA, specific projects proposed under the program or plan (e.g., Master Plan) may rely on the Program EIR as the base environmental document for environmental review. Subsequent activities (or projects) in the program or plan must be examined in light of the Program EIR to determine whether an additional environmental document (i.e., Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or EIR) must be prepared. If the lead agency finds that the subsequent activity or project would not result in new effects or require new mitigation measures, the lead agency can approve the activity as being within the scope of the project covered by the Program EIR, and no new environmental document would be required. If an EIR is required for a subsequent activity, the subsequent EIR can focus solely on new effects that were not considered before. According to CEQA, a Program EIR will be most helpful in dealing with subsequent activities if it deals with the effects of the program as specifically and comprehensively as possible. With a good and detailed analysis of the program, many subsequent activities could be found to be within the scope of the project described in the Program EIR, with the result that no further environmental documents would be required.

In accordance with CEQA and the *State CEQA Guidelines*, which are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with Section 15000, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was distributed on January 23, 2003, to the State Office of Planning and Research and responsible and trustee agencies as well as private organizations and individuals that may have an interest in the proposed project. The purpose of the NOP was to provide notification that Los Angeles Valley College planned to prepare an EIR for the proposed project and to solicit guidance on the scope and content of the EIR. Approximately 110 copies of the NOP were distributed to various agencies, organizations, and individuals. Responses to the NOP as well as a copy of the NOP are included in Appendix A of this Draft EIR. In addition, a public scoping meeting was held on February 6, 2003, to provide information on the project and to receive comments on issues to be addressed in the EIR. Written comments submitted at the scoping meeting are also provided in Appendix A.

This EIR focuses on the environmental impacts identified as potentially significant during preparation of the initial study and public circulation of the NOP and addresses other adverse impacts of the proposed project as well.

As the lead agency under CEQA, the Los Angeles Community College District directed the preparation of this EIR through the use of professional environmental services contractors. This EIR, however, reflects the independent judgment of the District and is intended to comply with CEQA and the *State CEQA Guidelines* (see Public Resources Code, §21100; *State CEQA Guidelines*, §§15120-15132).

A Draft EIR was circulated for public review and comment for a period of 45 days from April 29, 2003 to June 16, 2003. During this period, comments from the general public, organizations, and agencies on environmental issues raised in the Draft EIR and the Draft EIR's accuracy and completeness were submitted to the District at the following address:

Cindy Sardo, Director of Public Relations
Los Angeles Valley College
5800 Fulton Avenue
Valley Glen, CA 91401
tel. (818) 947-2433
fax (818) 778-5515

Upon completion of the public review period, this Final EIR has been prepared that includes the comments on the Draft EIR received during the formal public review period as well as responses to those comments (see Chapter 9 of this Final EIR).

Prior to approval of the proposed project, the Los Angeles Community College District, as the lead agency, is required to certify that the EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA, that the Los Angeles Community College District, as the decision-making body for the proposed project, has reviewed and considered the information in the EIR, and that the EIR reflects the independent judgment of the Los Angeles Community College District.

Prior to approval of the proposed project, CEQA also requires the District to adopt “findings” with respect to each significant environmental effect identified in the EIR (Public Resources Code, §21081; *State CEQA Guidelines*, §15091). For each such significant effect, CEQA requires the approving agency to make one or more of the following findings:

- The project has been altered to avoid or substantially lessen significant impacts identified in the EIR.
- The responsibility to carry out the above is under the jurisdiction of another agency.
- Specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including provision of employment opportunities for highly trained workers, make infeasible the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in the Final EIR.

In the event that the Los Angeles Community College District, as the lead agency, concludes that the proposed project will result in significant effects that are identified in the EIR but are not substantially lessened or avoided by feasible mitigation measures and alternatives, the District must adopt a “statement of overriding considerations” prior to approval of the proposed project (Public Resources Code, §21081, subd. (b); *State CEQA Guidelines*, §15093). Such statements are intended under CEQA to provide a written means by which the lead agency balances in writing the benefits of the proposed project and the significant and unavoidable environmental impacts. Where the lead agency concludes that the economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits outweigh the unavoidable environmental impacts, the lead agency may find such impacts “acceptable” and approve the project.

In addition, pursuant to Section 21081.6 of the Public Resources Code, public agencies, when approving a project, must also adopt a monitoring or reporting program for the changes that were incorporated into the project or made a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment. The reporting or monitoring program is adopted at the time of project approval and must be designed to ensure compliance during project implementation. If the Los Angeles Community College District, as the lead agency, approves

the proposed project, Los Angeles Valley College will implement the proposed project and mitigation monitoring program on behalf of the District.

1-5 INTENDED USES OF THE EIR AND OTHER PUBLIC AGENCY ACTIONS

According to Section 15121 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, an EIR is a public document used by a public agency to analyze the potentially significant environmental effects of a proposed project, to identify alternatives, and to disclose possible ways to reduce or avoid possible environmental damage. As an informational document, an EIR does not recommend for or against approving a project. The main purpose of an EIR is to inform governmental decision makers and the public about potential environmental impacts of the project.

Accordingly, this EIR will be used by the Los Angeles Community College District, as the lead agency under CEQA, in making decisions with regard to approval of the Master Plan and implementation of projects identified in the Master Plan.

The information in this EIR may also be used by the responsible agencies identified below in deciding whether to grant permits or approvals necessary to construct or operate the proposed projects discussed in the Master Plan.

- State of California
 - Department of General Services
 - Division of the State Architect
 - Department of Toxic Substances Control
 - State Fire Marshal
- Regional Water Quality Control Board (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit)
- South Coast Air Quality Management District (stationary source permits)
- City of Los Angeles
 - City Planning Commission and City Council (planning/zoning approvals)
 - Department of Water and Power
 - Fire Department
 - Public Works Department
 - Bureau of Engineering
 - Bureau of Sanitation
 - Department of Transportation

1-6 ORGANIZATION OF THE EIR

The Summary chapter of this EIR provides an overview of the detailed information contained in subsequent chapters. It consists of an introduction, a description of the proposed project and alternatives considered, a discussion of areas of controversy and issues to be resolved, a table that summarizes the potential environmental impacts in each category, and the significance determination, mitigation measures, and the level of significance after mitigation for those impacts.

Chapter 1 of this EIR describes the purpose of the proposed project and project background. It includes a brief overview of the CEQA environmental review process, a description of the intended uses of the EIR and public agency actions, and this section describing the organization of the EIR.

Chapter 2 of this EIR provides a detailed description of the proposed project as well as the project objectives, location, characteristics, and construction scenario. Related projects in the project area are also identified in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 of this EIR describes the potential environmental effects of implementing the proposed project. The discussion in Chapter 3 is organized by impact category (e.g., air quality, archaeological resources, paleontological resources, historical resources, geology and soils, hazardous materials, traffic, etc.). For each impact category, the analysis and discussion is organized into four subsections as described below:

- **Environmental Setting** – This subsection describes the environmental conditions in the vicinity of the proposed project site at the time of publication of the Notice of Preparation. It also describes applicable governing bodies and regulations. The environmental setting establishes the baseline conditions by which the Los Angeles Community College District will determine whether specific project-related impacts are significant.
- **Environmental Impacts** – For each environmental impact category, criteria are identified for determining whether an impact is considered significant. This subsection provides detailed information on the environmental effects of the proposed project and whether or not the impacts of the proposed project exceed the established significance criteria.
- **Mitigation Measures** – This subsection identifies potentially feasible mitigation measures that would avoid or substantially reduce significant adverse project-related impacts. It also identifies mitigation measures that the District has agreed to implement, and indicates whether or not project-related impacts would be reduced to below a level of significance with implementation of the mitigation measures identified in the EIR.
- **Unavoidable Significant Adverse Impacts** – This subsection identifies any residual significant and unavoidable adverse effects of the proposed project that would result even after mitigation measures have been applied.

Chapter 4 of this EIR describes the No Project Alternative and other alternatives that were considered during the planning process. It also identifies the environmentally superior alternative.

Chapter 5 of this EIR provides an overview of the potential environmental effects of the proposed project, including:

- **Unavoidable Significant Adverse Impacts** – This subsection summarizes for quick reference and identification the unavoidable significant adverse impacts described in detail in Chapter 3.
- **Impacts Found Not to Be Significant** – This subsection summarizes for quick reference and identification the potentially adverse impacts that were found not to be significant.
- **Irreversible Environmental Changes** – This subsection discusses any irreversible changes to the environment that could occur as a result of construction or operation of the proposed project.
- **Cumulative Impacts** – This subsection addresses the potentially significant cumulative impacts that may result from the proposed project when taking into account the related or cumulative impacts resulting from other reasonably foreseeable past, present, and future projects.
- **Growth Inducing Impacts** – This subsection describes the potential for the proposed project to foster economic or population growth or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment.

Chapter 6 provides a bibliography of reference materials used in the preparation of this EIR.

Chapter 7 includes a list of persons and organizations consulted during preparation of this EIR.

Chapter 8 identifies the preparers of this EIR.

Chapter 9 includes public comments on the Draft EIR and responses to those comments.

Several Appendices follow Chapter 9.

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