

# INTRODUCTION

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## PURPOSE

*This introduction is intended to provide the reader with general information regarding (1) the purpose of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR); (2) standards for EIR adequacy, (3) an introduction to the format and content of this EIR, and (4) the EIR processing requirements for the proposed project. Environmental documents can be confusing; therefore, the purpose of this section is to educate the reader regarding the intent, format, and content of this EIR so that it can be more useful.*

## PROJECT SUMMARY

The proposed project includes the following four distinct components:

- The Master's College Master Plan.
- Extension of Dockweiler Drive from its current terminus near Valle Del Oro, through The Master's College property south of the main campus, to the western boundary of The Master's College property. The western terminus of Deputy Jake Drive would then be extended and connected to the Dockweiler extension.
- A Tentative Tract Map (TTM) to allow for the future development of 54 condominium units north of the proposed Deputy Jake Drive extension on 4.7 acres, open space parcels, and portions of the Dockweiler and Deputy Jake Drive extensions. In addition, this component includes a 2.48-acre area that is proposed to be graded for future replacement of the existing 0.75-million-gallon water tank with a 5.0-million-gallon, 32-foot-tall, 132-foot-diameter water tank.
- The dedication of 20.5 acres of open space within The Master's College property south of the proposed Deputy Jake extension, including the 5-acre improved Creekview Park, to the City of Santa Clarita for parkland/open space purposes.

The project site includes the 94.96-acre property owned by The Master's College; 7.02 and 0.61 acres to the east and west of The Master's College property, respectively, and 2.58 acres within a larger parcel owned by the Metropolitan Water District (MWD) that bisects the project site, which will accommodate the proposed Dockweiler Drive extension; and a 2.48-acre site to the east of The Master's College property where 0.75- and 3.0-million-gallon water tanks are located. The project site boundary is shown in **Figure 2.0-3, Project Site Boundary/Environmental Setting**. As shown, a 12.6-acre swath of land owned by the MWD runs through The Master's College property. The 94.96 acres owned by The Master's College exist to the north and south of the 12.6 acres owned by MWD.

A detailed description of each of the project components, the existing condition of the project site and surrounding area, history of the project site, project components, and surrounding communities are

provided in **Section 2.0, Project Description**, and **Section 3.0, Environmental and Regulatory Setting**, of this EIR.

## **PROJECT ENTITLEMENTS**

In order to allow for the proposed development to occur, the project applicant, The Master's College, is requesting approval of Master Case 04-496, which includes The Master's College Master Plan 07-001, General Plan Amendment 04-009, Zone Change 04-006, Tentative Tract Map (TTM) 66503, Conditional Use Permit 04-031, Hillside Review Permit 04-010, Ridgeline Alteration Permit 07-001, and Oak Tree Permit 04-050.

Preliminary environmental review of the proposed project was conducted by the City of Santa Clarita, Community Development Department. An initial study was prepared as part of this review and it was determined by City staff that preparation of an EIR is required. The initial study determined that the following issues should be addressed in this EIR: aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, geology and soils, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, noise, population and housing, public services, transportation/circulation, and utilities and service systems. On November 1, 2006, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was circulated for a 30-day review period, pursuant to the requirements of the *State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines*, in order to solicit input from interested public agencies regarding the content of the EIR. A scoping hearing to provide an overview of the project and the environmental process was conducted on November 30, 2006. The scoping hearing provided the general public an opportunity to provide comment as to what issues should be addressed in the EIR. A revised NOP was circulated for a 30-day review period on May 21, 2007. The revised NOP included the proposed water tank replacement, which was not previously a part of the project, and additional information on the requested Conditional Use Permit 04-031.

## **PURPOSE OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

Subsequent to the passage of CEQA in 1970, a process was established that would (1) inform governmental decision makers and the public about the potentially significant environmental effects of proposed activities; (2) identify ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced; (3) prevent significant, avoidable damage to the environment by requiring changes in projects through the use of alternatives or mitigation measures when the governmental agency finds the changes to be feasible; and (4) disclose to the public the reasons why a governmental agency approved the project in the

manner the agency chose if significant environmental effects are involved.<sup>1</sup> This information is the basis of any EIR.

## EIR ADEQUACY

The principal use of an EIR is to provide input and information for comprehensive planning analysis. The staff reports prepared by City staff synthesize pertinent environmental and planning information for presentation to the City of Santa Clarita Planning Commission and City Council. Given the important role of the EIR in this planning and decision making process, it is imperative that the information presented in the EIR be factual, adequate, and complete. The standards for adequacy of an EIR, defined in Section 15151 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, are as follows:

*An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The courts have looked not for perfection but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure.*

This EIR has been prepared by the City of Santa Clarita in accordance with the *State CEQA Guidelines* and City guidelines for the implementation of CEQA.

## Type of EIR and Level of Analysis Detail

CEQA provides a lead agency with the flexibility to prepare different types of EIRs, and to employ different procedural means to focus environmental analysis on the issues appropriate for decision at each level of environmental review (Public Resources Code Section 21093(a)). CEQA provides that the “degree of specificity required in an EIR will correspond to the degree of specificity involved in the underlying activity which is described in the EIR” (*State CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15146).

A “project EIR” is the most common type of EIR and examines the environmental impacts of a specific development project. This type of EIR should focus primarily on the changes in the environment that would result from the development project. According to Section 15161 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, a project EIR shall examine all phases of the project including planning, construction and operation.

This EIR can be classified as a project EIR. There has been a great deal of information submitted for The Master’s College Master Plan. Given the volume of information provided for The Master’s College Master

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<sup>1</sup> State of California, *State CEQA Guidelines*, as amended July 11, 2006, Section 15002(a) of the California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3.

Plan and other project components, there is enough information contained in this EIR to support adequate environmental documentation.

## EIR FORMAT AND CONTENT

### Report Format

This EIR has been prepared in accordance with the environmental review requirements established under CEQA (1970, as amended), the *State CEQA Guidelines* for implementation of CEQA as prepared by the State Office of Planning and Research and adopted by the Secretary for Resources, and City of Santa Clarita Guidelines for implementation of CEQA. Among the principal objectives of CEQA is that the environmental review process be a public one, and that the EIR be an informational document for governmental decision makers and the public about potential significant environmental effects of proposed activities.

The environmental impact analysis presented in this EIR is divided into 11 major sections within **Section 5.0, Environmental Impact Analysis**, which describe the existing conditions present in the area surrounding the project site; predict the potential individual and cumulative impacts attributable to the proposed project; present mitigation measures that are intended to minimize or avoid significant impacts caused by the proposed project; and identify the significant impacts which would occur after implementation of mitigation measures.

### Report Content

To determine which environmental topics should be addressed in this EIR, the City of Santa Clarita prepared an initial study, and circulated it along with the NOP from November 1, 2006, through November 30, 2006, in order to receive input from interested public agencies and private parties. A revised initial study and NOP, which included the water tank project component and Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the residential building height of three stories, was circulated from May 21, 2007, through June 21, 2007. The original and revised initial study and NOP are provided in **Appendix I** of this EIR along with all written comments received from public agencies and private parties. Additionally, notes were taken at the November 30, 2006, scoping meeting and are also provided in **Appendix I**. As concluded in the initial study, the following topics are addressed in this document:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing

- Fire Services
- Sheriff Services
- Transportation/Circulation
- Water Service
- Solid Waste
- Wastewater Disposal

As concluded in the initial study, the following topics have not been included in this document because there is no potential for environmental impacts to:

- Agricultural Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Mineral Resources
- Parks
- Recreation
- Schools

In addition to these technical sections, other important information is incorporated as part of this EIR. As required by CEQA, this EIR also includes (1) description of the existing environmental and regulatory setting that exists in the project site vicinity; (2) description of the ultimate buildout of the proposed project (i.e., **Section 2.0, Project Description**); (3) a description and analysis of alternatives that can reduce the proposed project's impact potential (i.e., **Section 7.0, Project Alternatives**); and (4) sections that summarize cumulative, long-term, and irreversible effects associated with the proposed project.

Documents referred to, referenced or cited, are incorporated by reference and are available for review at the City of Santa Clarita, Community Development Department, 23920 Valencia Boulevard, Suite 302, Santa Clarita, California 91355.

## EIR PROCESSING REQUIREMENTS

The City of Santa Clarita Community Development Department directed and supervised the preparation of the draft EIR. During preparation of the draft EIR, many informal documentation reviews were held with City staff. The draft EIR will also be circulated for a 45-day public review period as mandated by CEQA. During the 45-day review period, written comments concerning the adequacy of the document may be submitted by all interested public agencies and private parties to the City of Santa Clarita, 23920 Valencia Boulevard, Suite 302, Santa Clarita, California 91355; Attention: James Chow, Community Development (The Master's College).

During and after the 45-day public review and comment period, public hearings on Master Case 04-496 will be held before the City of Santa Clarita Planning Commission regarding The Master's College Master Plan 07-001, General Plan Amendment 04-009, Zone Change 04-006, Tentative Tract Map (TTM) 66503, Conditional Use Permit 04-031, Hillside Review Permit 04-010, Ridgeline Alteration Permit 07-001, and Oak Tree Permit 04-050, other requested changes or actions, and the adequacy of the draft EIR, at which time public comments will be heard. Following the public hearings, written responses to all written comments will be compiled into a final EIR. As required by CEQA, responses to comments submitted by

public agencies will be distributed to those agencies for review 10 days prior to consideration of the final EIR. At the conclusion of the EIR public hearing process, the Planning Commission will vote on whether to recommend certification of the adequacy of the EIR to the City of Santa Clarita City Council and to recommend approval of the proposed project, The Master's College Master Plan 07-001, General Plan Amendment 04-009, Zone Change 04-006, TTM 66503, Conditional Use Permit 04-031, Hillside Review Permit 04-010, Ridgeline Alteration Permit 07-001, Oak Tree Permit 04-050, and other requested changes or actions. The recommendation will then be presented to the City Council who will decide what action to take with respect to the EIR and the proposed project which could include outright approval, conditional approval, or denial of the proposed project, The Master's College Master Plan 07-001, General Plan Amendment 04-009, Zone Change 04-006, TTM 66503, Conditional Use Permit 04-031, Hillside Review Permit 04-010, Ridgeline Alteration Permit 07-001, Oak Tree Permit 04-050, and other requested changes or actions.