

SUMMARY

Fire protection and emergency medical response services for the project site and the surrounding area are provided by the Los Angeles County Fire Department. Eight fire stations and three fire camps provide fire protection services for the Santa Clarita Valley area. Fire Station 73, located at 24875 Railroad Avenue is the jurisdictional company for the project site.¹ Additional fire protection services would be provided by the closest available district response units. Paramedic services are also provided to the area by the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

The proposed project site is located in an area that has been designated as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone by the County of Los Angeles Fire Department, which denotes the County Forester's highest fire hazard potential.

Fire service to the proposed project would be funded through payment of developer fees. Developer fees would be used to help fund construction of new facilities and additional equipment. In addition, tax revenues would provide for the operation and staffing of the fire stations providing service to the project site. The Master Plan, Dockweiler Drive and Deputy Jake Drive extensions and the Tentative Tract Map (TTM) to allow for the future development of 54 condominium units would be required to meet County codes and requirements, which have been adopted by the City, relative to providing adequate fire protection services to the site during both the construction and operational stages of the project. Fire Department access would be improved by the proposed extensions of Dockweiler and Deputy Jake Drives because new site access points would be provided. The installation of the 5.00million-gallon water tank would support fire suppression efforts should they be needed by providing a water source in close proximity to the project. Additionally, the dedication of 20.5 acres of existing vacant land for future parkland/open space purposes would not create a new demand for fire protection services, including paramedic services. As a result, the project would not diminish the staffing or the response times of existing fire stations in the City of Santa Clarita, nor would it create a special fire protection requirement on the site that would result in a decline in existing service levels in the City. Therefore, the proposed project would not have a significant project-specific or cumulative impact on fire protection services in the City of Santa Clarita.

INTRODUCTION

The following analysis of fire services is based on information provided by the County of Los Angeles Fire Department. The Fire Department maintains ultimate review and approval authority over aspects of the proposed development that relate to fire protection, and may identify further recommendations and/or requirements.

¹ Written correspondence, David R. Leininger, Acting Chief, Forestry Division, County of Los Angeles Fire Department, January 22, 2007 (**Appendix 5.9.1**).

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Fire Protection Services

Fire protection service is provided to the City of Santa Clarita by the County of Los Angeles Fire Department. The Santa Clarita Valley is supported by eight fire stations and three fire camps. The jurisdictional (closest) station for the project site is Fire Station 73, located at 24875 Railroad Avenue in Santa Clarita. This station has a four-person engine company and a two-person paramedic squad. The closest ladder company, necessary for fighting fires in structures over 30 feet high, is in Fire Station 126, located at 26320 Citrus Street in the Valencia Civic Center. The closest hazardous materials squad is in Fire Station 76, located at 27223 Henry Mayo Drive in Valencia. Additional fire protection services would be provided by the closest available district response units. Should a significant incident occur, the project site would be served by the resources of the Fire Department, not just the stations closest to the site or the eight that have primary jurisdiction within the Santa Clarita Valley. The location of these stations is illustrated on **Figure 5.9.1-1**.

The level of service provided to areas within the district is determined by the Fire Department. Nationally recognized response time targets for urban areas are five minutes for a basic life support unit (engine company) and eight minutes for an advanced life support unit (paramedic squad). It should be noted that the City encompasses rural and undeveloped areas as well as urban areas. The Fire Department is currently meeting these standards within the more urban areas in Santa Clarita Valley.² However, additional manpower, equipment and facilities are presently needed in the project area.³

Funding used for land acquisitions, facility improvements, and new equipment is generated through the Fire Department's Developer Fee Program, and funding for staffing and operational costs is generated from local property taxes.⁴ The Santa Clarita City Council passed Resolution 08-10 on January 8, 2008, adopting the Los Angeles County Fire Department developer fee of \$0.9341 per square foot.

The applicant is required to pay fees under the County Fire Department Developer Fee Program for land and construction of fire stations, and the full cost of fire fighting equipment. This fee, or an in-lieu donation, is in an amount proportionate to the demand created by the project.

² Phone conversation with Danny Kokler, Planner, County of Los Angeles Fire Department, January 26, 2007. Response times may be longer for more remote and rural portions of the Valley.

³ Written correspondence, David R. Leininger, Acting Chief, Forestry Division, County of Los Angeles Fire Department, January 22, 2007.

⁴ Ibid.



SOURCE: The Los Angeles County Fire Department - February 2007

FIGURE 5.9.1-1

Fire Station Locations

Wildland Fire Hazard Potential

The Fire Department designates lands in the County in regards to their potential for wildland fire hazards. These designations are made by the County Forester, and are based on criteria, including an area's accessibility, amount and type of vegetative cover, water availability, and topography. The two designations used by the Fire Department are Moderate Fire Hazard Zone and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Areas within the County not designated as either a Moderate Fire Hazard Zone or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone are not considered to be subject to wildland fire hazards. The differences between Moderate Fire Hazard Zone and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone designations are relatively minor, in that one or more of the four criteria (access, topography, vegetation, and water) may pose less of a constraint in Moderate Fire Hazard Zone than in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Additionally, the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone has more restrictive building requirements than the Moderate Fire Hazard Zone, and is considered to be the most severe fire zone.

The project site is located within an area designated as Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.⁵ Characteristics of the project site which contributed to this designation include the limited access via Placerita Canyon Road and the topography and vegetative cover of the ridgeline.

The Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone typically has the following vegetation types: chaparral, coastal sage, riparian, and oak woodlands vegetation communities. Wildland fires are relatively common occurrences in these plant communities, which include but are not limited to ceanothus, chamise, sumac, sages, and wildland grasses, and are similar to the types found in Santa Clarita Valley and surrounding areas. These plant species have adapted to periodic wildland fire conditions, and maintain a healthy ecosystem in the regional vicinity. These plant communities pose the greatest threat to expanding urban development due to their high combustibility and their dense biomass. However, in the areas where these plant communities border urban development, the frequency of fire events may be diminished as a result of fire prevention and fire suppression activities. Fire prevention activities include prescribed burns, vegetation thinning/removal, and creation of buffer zones; whereas fire suppression involves measures which control fires once they have started (i.e., fuel breaks, use of fire fighting equipment, etc.).

Typically, during the spring months vegetation begins to lose its moisture content, and by the summer and fall when Santa Ana wind conditions begin to occur, wildland fire conditions become extremely high. Historically, large fires tend to burn these areas every 20 to 25 years. The County Forester has indicated that wildland fire events have occurred in the regional area. When chaparral and coastal sage growth is younger, they are more succulent, with little or no dead or dying branches, provide less horizontal fuel

⁵ Written correspondence, David R. Leininger, Acting Chief, Forestry Division, County of Los Angeles Fire Department, January 22, 2007.

continuity, have a higher average fuel moisture content, and as a result are usually more fire retardant. As these plant species reach 20 or more years, the dead to live fuel ratio increases creating more available fuel to carry fire with very high intensities and energy releases. Generally, fire prevention for urban development in wildland fire hazard areas focuses on restricting the types of building materials used, building design, and incorporating setbacks. Development within the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone is required to meet the building construction requirements specified in the City's Building and Safety Code.

Fire Codes and Guidelines

The availability of sufficient on-site water pressure is a basic requirement of the Fire Department. The development may require fire flows up to 5,000 gallons per minute at 20 pounds per square inch residual pressure for up to a 5-hour duration.⁶ Final fire flows are based on the size of buildings, relationship to other structures, property lines and types of construction used.

Due to the relatively high fire hazard potential which exists in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, development within these areas is subject to various governmental codes, guidelines, and programs which are aimed at reducing the hazard potential to acceptable levels. The County of Los Angeles has prepared Fuel Modification Plan Guidelines, which set forth guidelines and landscape criteria for all new construction to implement ordinances relating to fuel modification planning and help reduce the threat of fires in high hazard areas.⁷ Per Section 1117.2.1 of the County Fire Code: "A fuel modification plan, a landscape plan and an irrigation plan shall be submitted with any subdivision of land or prior to any new construction where the structure or subdivision is located within areas designated as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone in the Los Angeles County Building Code". A fuel modification plan identifies specific zones within a property which are subject to fuel modification. A fuel modification zone is a strip of land where combustible native or ornamental vegetation has been modified and/or partially or totally replaced with drought tolerant, fire resistant plants. The City has adopted the County Fire Code.

Current Site Conditions

The project site is bordered by adjacent residential land uses to the north and south. Open space is adjacent to the east and west. An undeveloped ridgeline with the following vegetation communities forms the southern portion of the property: Big Sagebrush-Rubber Rabbitbrush Scrub, California Sagebrush Scrub, California Buckwheat Scrub, California Sagebrush-California Buckwheat Scrub,

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Fuel Modification Plan Guidelines for Projects Located in Fire Zone 4 of Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, County of Los Angeles Fire Department, Prevention Bureau, Forestry Division, Brush Clearance Section, Adopted January, 1998.

California Sagebrush-Deerweed Scrub, Chamise Chaparral, Chamise-California Buckwheat Chaparral, Chamise-California Sagebrush-Yerba Santa Chaparral, Chamise-Hoary-leaf Ceanothus Scrub, Coast Live Oak Woodland, Coast Prickly Pear Succulent Scrub, Disturbed, Hoary-leaf Ceanothus Scrub, Mexican Elderberry Scrub, Non-native grassland, Ornamental Landscaping, Scalebroom Scrub, and Scrub Oak-Hoary-leaf Ceanothus Chaparral. Currently, access to The Master's College campus is limited to Placerita Canyon Road. Water infrastructure currently exists on The Master's College property to serve the existing buildings, which include dormitories, a gym, student center, dining hall, and others.

PROJECT IMPACTS

Significance Threshold Criteria

According to the City of Santa Clarita Environmental Guidelines, a project would have a significant effect on the environment if it would:

- Substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or expanded fire protection services or facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives.

Construction-Related Impacts

The Master's College currently has fire hydrants and water mains serving existing facilities. Placerita Canyon Road provides vehicular access for the Fire Department. These existing resources would be utilized during demolition and construction should a fire hazard take place. Additionally, as the proposed project components are built out, construction would also be required to comply with all applicable Building and Fire Code requirements for such items as types of roofing materials, building construction, brush clearance, water mains, fire hydrant flows, hydrant spacing, access and design, and other hazard reduction programs for Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, as set forth by the County Forester and Fire Warden. Therefore, construction activities would not have a significant impact on fire protection.

Operational Impacts

The operational phase of the proposed project would not present special fire protection problems; however, the intensification of land uses combined with the increase in human activity on the project site would result in an increased demand for fire protection services, including paramedic services. Based on a preliminary review of the proposed project, the Fire Department has stated that the development would increase service demands on the existing fire protection resources in an area where additional manpower,

equipment, and facilities are currently needed.⁸ However, immediate emergency medical needs on campus would be partially met by The Master's College Campus Security (See 5.9.2, **Sheriff Services**, for additional discussion of Campus Security). Other project components, including the extensions of Dockweiler Drive and Deputy Jake Drive would not result in an increase in human activity which would cause an increased demand for fire protection services, including paramedic services. The installation of the 5.0-million-gallon water tank could support fire suppression efforts should they be needed by providing a water source in close proximity to the project. The dedication of 20.5 acres of existing vacant land for future parkland/open space purposes would not create a new demand for fire protection services, including paramedic services.

In response to increasing demands for new facilities, equipment, and staffing created by new development, the County of Los Angeles has implemented a Developer Fee Program to fund the purchase of station sites, the construction of new stations, and the funding for new equipment. The Developer Fees, which are currently \$0.93 per square foot of new development (all land uses), are adjusted annually by the County in order to maintain adequate levels of service and are collected at the time building permits are issued. It is expected that fees collected from the project applicant would adequately fund fire service demanded by the proposed project. This fee, or an in-lieu donation, constitutes mitigation of growth impacts. In addition, tax revenues would provide for the operation and staffing of the fire stations. Finally, the project would be required to meet City/County codes and requirements relative to providing adequate fire protection services to the site during both the construction and operational stages of the project. As a result, operation of the project would not diminish the staffing or the response times of existing fire stations in the Santa Clarita Valley, and would not create a special fire protection problem on the site that would result in a decline in existing services levels in the Valley. Impacts to the Fire Department during project operation would be less than significant.

Fire Department access would be improved by the proposed extension of Dockweiler and Deputy Jake Drives because new site access points would be provided. These roadway extensions would result in additional emergency access points and would better accommodate Fire Department vehicles and equipment. Additionally, emergency access and service circulation would be provided at the east end of campus, east of the main campus entry to access the secure dormitory parking area and off of the proposed roundabout near the proposed chapel. The emergency access road proposed at the east end of campus would address the community concern of access out of Placerita Canyon in the event of an emergency. Access from the canyon would be provided through the existing Reese Center parking lot

⁸ Written Correspondence, David R. Leininger, Acting Chief, Forestry Division Los Angeles County Fire Department, January 22, 2007.

and a control gate would be used to prevent cut through traffic. Emergency access impacts would be less than significant.

Wildland Fire Hazards

The ridgeline within the southern portion of the project site is vegetated with many plant communities that represent a wildland fire hazard and the project site is within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Characteristics of the project site which contributed to this designation include the limited access via Placerita Canyon Road and the topography and vegetative cover of the ridgeline. The proposed project would reduce the severity of these characteristics by grading the ridgeline for the extension of Dockweiler Drive as a new access road. Given compliance with all proposed state, City and County requirements related to land management within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, including the preparation of a Fuel Modification Plan, the project would not diminish the staffing or the response times of existing fire stations in the Santa Clarita Valley, nor would it create a special fire protection requirement on the site that would result in a decline in existing services levels in the Valley. Therefore, impacts related to wildland fire hazards would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES ALREADY INCORPORATED INTO THE PROJECT

No mitigation measures pertaining to fire services have been incorporated into the project.

MITIGATION MEASURES PROPOSED BY THIS EIR

The proposed project would not result in significant impacts to fire services; consequently no mitigation measures are recommended by this EIR.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The cumulative development scenario (referred to as the “Santa Clarita Valley Cumulative Build-Out Scenario”) entails buildout of all lands under the current land use designations indicated in the City of Santa Clarita General Plan and the Los Angeles County Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan, plus the project, plus all known active pending General Plan Amendment requests for additional urban development in the City of Santa Clarita and unincorporated areas of Santa Clarita Valley. In this report, the planning area is often referred to as the “Valley.” A list of the future development activity (with and without the project) expected in the Valley under the Santa Clarita Valley Cumulative Build-Out Scenario is presented below in **Table 5.9.1-1, Cumulative Development Activity – Santa Clarita Valley Cumulative Build-Out Scenario.**

Table 5.9.1-1
Cumulative Development Activity – Santa Clarita Valley Cumulative Buildout Scenario

Land Use Types	Cumulative Buildout w/o Project ¹	Project	Cumulative Buildout w/ Project
Single Family	93,281 du		93,720 du
Multi-Family	48,703 du	54 du	48,757 du
Mobile Home	2,699 du		2,699 du
Commercial Retail	19,859,030 sq. ft.		19,899,030 sq. ft.
Hotel	2,071 rooms		2,071 rooms
Sit-Down Restaurant	283,790 sq. ft.		283,790 sq. ft.
Fast Food Restaurant	23,600 sq. ft.		23,600 sq. ft.
Movie Theater	3,300 seats		3,300 seats
Health Club	54,000 sq. ft.		54,000 sq. ft.
Car Dealership	411,000 sq. ft.		411,000 sq. ft.
Elem./Middle School	278,953 students		278,953 students
High School	12,843 students		12,843 students
College	29,348 students	600 students	29,948 students
Hospital	247,460 sq. ft.		247,460 sq. ft.
Library	171,790 sq. ft.		171,790 sq. ft.
Church	501,190 sq. ft.		501,190 sq. ft.
Day Care	785,000 sq. ft.		785,000 sq. ft.
Industrial Park	41,743,950 sq. ft.		41,743,950 sq. ft.
Business Park	8,424,330 sq. ft.		8,424,330 sq. ft.
Manufacturing/Warehouse	3,932,470 sq. ft.		3,932,470 sq. ft.
Utilities	1,150,240 sq. ft.		1,150,240 sq. ft.
Commercial Office	6,380,520 sq. ft.		6,380,520 sq. ft.
Medical Office	133,730 sq. ft.		133,730 sq. ft.
Golf Course	1,238.0 ac		1,238.0 ac
Developed Parkland	464.3 ac		493.3 ac
Undeveloped Parkland	1,000.0 ac		1,000.0 ac
Special Generator ²	413.0 sg		413.0 sg

Source: City of Santa Clarita

du = dwelling unit; sq. ft. = square feet; ac = acres; sg = special generator

¹ Santa Clarita Valley Consolidated Traffic Model (2004). Includes existing development, buildout under the existing City of Santa Clarita General Plan and Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan and active pending General Plan Amendment requests.

² Includes Wayside Honor Ranch, Six Flags Magic Mountain, Travel Village, CHP Office and Agua Dulce Airport.

In order to analyze the cumulative impacts of this project in combination with other expected future growth, the amount and location of growth expected to occur in addition to that of the project were

predicted. Excluding the project, total residential population within the Valley under this Build-Out Scenario would be 435,291 persons. With the project, assuming all additional 600 students would reside in Santa Clarita and the population increase associated with the single family residences, the total resident population in the Valley would be 435,958 persons. Assuming the addition of 767 residents resulting from master plan implementation and the 54 condominium units, the proposed project would represent less than 1 percent of the total resident population under the Build-Out Scenario. Other project components, including the extensions of Dockweiler Drive and Deputy Jake Drive and the dedication of 20.5 acres of vacant land for future parkland/open space purposes would not generate a resident population. Additionally, removal of a 0.75-million-gallon water tank followed by installation of a 5.0-million-gallon water tank would not generate a resident population.

Increases in development in the project vicinity, including the project, could result in an increase in the average response time for fire protection services, particularly for non-emergency calls. There would be a cumulative impact on fire services if the proposed project and other projects failed to comply with state, County and City regulations. However, compliance with state, City and County fire codes, standards and guidelines, and incorporation of project-specific mitigation measures, as applicable, would reduce fire protection impacts to a less than significant level. Moreover, increased cumulative development demands would be met by increases in staffing and equipment, which would be funded by developer fees and increased taxes paid by new development. Therefore, cumulative impacts on fire protection are considered to be less than significant.

CUMULATIVE MITIGATION MEASURES

As no significant cumulative impacts to fire services would result from Valley buildout, which would include the proposed project, no mitigation measures are recommended by this EIR.

UNAVOIDABLE SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

Project-Specific Impacts

No significant project-specific impacts to fire services would occur with project implementation.

Cumulative Impacts

No significant cumulative impacts to fire services would result from Valley buildout, which would include the proposed project.