

CHAPTER 1 Introduction

1.1 OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed Huntington Beach Senior Center Project would provide an approximately 45,000-square-foot (sf) multi-purpose senior center on 5 acres of undeveloped land within Central Park to replace the existing senior center located at 1706 Orange Avenue. The 5-acre development would comprise the senior center structure, parking areas, vehicular storage, and outdoor areas. Landscaping around the building and parking lot would be drought-tolerant, low water usage-type vegetation.

The proposed senior center facility would be used for a variety of recreational programs and activities serving senior citizens, including the Seniors Outreach Program and public meetings or receptions when not occupied by primary functions. Rooms within the building would include multi-use rooms and classrooms, a community hall, group exercise room, fitness room, arts/crafts room, kitchen, dance room, lobby, and an administrative area.

1.2 PURPOSE AND LEGAL AUTHORITY

The proposed project requires the discretionary approval of the Huntington Beach City Council. Therefore, it is subject to the requirements of the *California Environmental Quality Act* (CEQA). In accordance with Section 15121 of the CEQA Guidelines, the purpose of this EIR is to serve as an informational document that:

...will inform public agency decision-makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effect of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project.

The EIR has been prepared as a Project EIR pursuant to Section 15161 of the CEQA Guidelines. A Project EIR is appropriate for a specific development project. As stated in the CEQA Guidelines:

...this type of EIR should focus on the changes in the environment that would result from the development project. The EIR shall examine all phases of the project, including planning, construction and operation.

This report is to serve as an informational document for the public and the City of Huntington Beach decision-makers. The process will culminate with a Planning Commission hearing to consider certification of a Final EIR (FEIR) and a decision on whether or not to approve the proposed project.

1.3 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

As a first step in complying with the procedural requirements of CEQA, the City prepared an Initial Study (IS) to determine whether any aspect of the project, either individually or cumulatively, may cause a significant effect on the environment and, if so, to narrow the focus (or scope) of the environmental analysis. For this project, the IS indicated that an EIR would be the appropriate type of environmental document to address potential environmental impacts resulting from project implementation.

After completion of the IS, the City filed a Notice of Preparation (NOP) with the California Office of Planning and Research indicating that an EIR would be prepared. In turn, the IS/NOP was distributed to appropriate public agencies for a 30-day public review period, which began on April 4, 2007 and ended on May 4, 2007. A scoping meeting was held on April 19, 2007. The purpose of the scoping period, including the scoping meeting, was to solicit comments on the scope and content of the environmental analysis to be included in the EIR. During the scoping period, the City received 11 written comment letters on the IS/NOP in addition to the verbal comments received at the scoping meeting. The IS/NOP, as well as the scoping comment letters and verbal comments, are included in Appendix 1 of this EIR.

During the preparation of this Draft EIR (DEIR), agencies, organizations, and persons who the City believed may have an interest in this project were specifically contacted. Information, data, and observations from these contacts are included in the DEIR. Agencies or interested persons who did not respond during the public review period of the IS/NOP will have an opportunity to comment during the 45-day public review period of the DEIR, as well as at subsequent hearings on the project.

This DEIR has been distributed to affected agencies, surrounding cities, and interested parties for a 45-day review period in accordance with Section 15087 of the CEQA Guidelines. The DEIR is available for review at the following locations:

City of Huntington Beach
Planning Department
2000 Main Street
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

City of Huntington Beach
City Clerks Office
2000 Main Street
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

Central Library and Cultural Center
7111 Talbert Avenue
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

View and download the documents online at: www.surfcity-hb.org

Navigate to: <http://www.surfcity-hb.org/CityDepartments/planning/major/>

All documents incorporated by reference in this EIR are available for review at the City.

Written comments on the DEIR should be addressed to:

Jennifer Villaseñor, Associate Planner
City of Huntington Beach
Department of Planning
2000 Main Street
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

Upon completion of the 45-day public review period, written responses to all environmental comments received by public agencies and the public during the review period will be completed. These comments,

and their responses, will be included in the Final EIR (FEIR) for consideration by the City of Huntington Beach Planning Commission, as well as any other public decision-makers. Furthermore, written responses to comments received from public agencies will be made available to those agencies at least 10 days prior to the public hearing at which certification of the FEIR would be considered.

It should be noted that environmental impacts may not always be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. When this occurs, they are considered significant and unavoidable impacts. If a public agency approves a project that has significant and unavoidable impacts, the agency shall state in writing the specific reasons for approving the project, based on the FEIR and any other information in the public record for the project. This is termed a “statement of overriding considerations” and is used to explain the specific reasons why the benefits of a proposed project make its unavoidable environmental effects acceptable. The statement is prepared, if required, based upon substantial evidence in the record and in conjunction with the action to approve the project, in accordance with Section 15093 of the CEQA Guidelines. Following project approval, a Notice of Determination is filed with the State Clearinghouse.

1.4 EIR ADEQUACY

The level of detail contained throughout this EIR is consistent with the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15151) and recent court decisions, which provide the standard of adequacy on which this document is based. The Guidelines state 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 the 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.

1.5 INTENDED USE OF THE EIR

As previously mentioned, this EIR is intended to provide decision-makers and the public with information that enables them to consider the environmental consequences of the proposed project. EIRs not only identify significant or potentially significant environmental effects, but also identify ways in which those impacts can be reduced to less-than-significant levels, whether through the imposition of mitigation measures or through the implementation of specific alternatives to the project. In a practical sense, EIRs function as a technique for fact-finding, allowing an applicant, concerned citizens, and agency staff an opportunity to collectively review and evaluate baseline conditions and project impacts through a process of full disclosure.

To gain the most value from this report, certain key points should be kept in mind:

- This report should be used as a tool to give the reader an overview of the possible ramifications of the proposed project.
- A specific environmental impact is not necessarily irreversible or permanent. Most impacts, particularly in urban, more developed areas, can be wholly or partially mitigated by incorporating conditions of approval and/or changes recommended in this report during the design and construction phases of project development.

- This report, while a summary of facts, reflects the professional judgment of the authors. The EIR was prepared by consultants retained by the City and by City staff, and was subject to the independent review and judgment of the City. The City independently reviewed and analyzed the EIR for the proposed project, and the EIR reflects the independent judgment of the City.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE EIR

This EIR provides a project-specific analysis of the potential environmental effects of the proposed project. The scope of the EIR includes issues identified by the City of Huntington Beach during the preparation of the IS/NOP, comment letters received during the IS/NOP review period, and comments received at the scoping meeting.

Based on the potential impacts of the proposed project, this EIR evaluates the following environmental issues identified in Appendix G of the 2007 CEQA Guidelines:

- Aesthetics/Visual Quality
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards/Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Land Use/Planning
- Noise
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic
- Utilities/Service Systems

In accordance with Section 15128 (Effects Not Found to Be Significant) of the CEQA Guidelines, the IS/NOP (Appendix 1) provides reasons why certain environmental impacts were not considered significant and, therefore, are not addressed further in this EIR. These include the following issue areas:

- Agricultural Resources
- Mineral Resources
- Population/Housing

In preparing the EIR, pertinent city policies and guidelines, existing EIRs, and background documents prepared by the City were all evaluated for its applicability to the proposed project. A list of references is provided at the end of each issue area section in Chapter 4.

1.7 PROJECT SPONSORS AND CONTACT PERSONS

The City of Huntington Beach is both the Applicant and the lead agency for the preparation of this EIR. EIP Associates, a division of PBS&J, is the environmental consultant to the City and the principal preparer of this EIR. Key contact persons are as follows:

Lead Agency:	City of Huntington Beach Department of Planning 2000 Main Street Huntington Beach, CA 92648
Lead Agency Contact:	Jennifer Villaseñor, Associate Planner (714) 374-1661 jvillasenor@surfcity-hb.org
Project Applicant:	City of Huntington Beach
EIR Consultant:	EIP Associates, a division of PBS&J 12301 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 430 Los Angeles, CA 90025

Project funding is provided by park in-lieu fees assessed upon Makar Properties, LLC (Makar) for the construction of the Pacific City project located at PCH, between 1st and Atlanta Streets. Consequently, Makar is partnering with the City in preparation of necessary documents, including project plans, for the proposed Senior Center.

1.8 DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

This EIR has been designed for easy use and reference. To help the reader locate information of particular interest, a brief summary of the contents of each chapter of the EIR is provided. The following chapters are contained within the EIR:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction**—This section provides an overview of the proposed project, the environmental process, and document organization.
- **Chapter 2: Executive Summary**—This section summarizes the characteristics of the proposed project, the environmental impacts, mitigation measures, and residual impacts with the proposed project.
- **Chapter 3: Project Description**—This section includes the location and boundaries of the proposed project; project objectives; a general description of technical, economic, and environmental characteristics; and intended uses of the EIR.
- **Chapter 4: Environmental Impact Analysis**—This section describes and evaluates the environmental issue areas, including the existing environmental setting, applicable environmental thresholds, environmental impacts (short term, long term, direct, and indirect), policy considerations related to the particular environmental issue area under analysis, and feasible mitigation measures capable of minimizing environmental harm.
- **Chapter 5: Alternatives to the Proposed Project**—This section analyzes feasible alternatives to the proposed project, which include the no project alternative and a reduction in project scale.
- **Chapter 6: Other CEQA Considerations**—This section provides a summary of the proposed project’s potential to lead to population growth and the indirect implications of that growth on the city; summarizes the discussion of cumulative impacts, provides a list of proposed project impacts that are significant and unavoidable by issue area; and identifies the irreversible changes to the natural environment resulting from the proposed project.
- **Chapter 7: List of EIR Preparers**—This section identifies all individuals responsible for the preparation of this report.

1.9 AREAS OF CONTROVERSY AND ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED

The discussion of environmental effects, mitigation measures, and alternatives, as summarized in Table 2-2 in Chapter 2 (Summary) and evaluated in detail in this EIR, constitutes the identification of issues to be resolved and areas of controversy, as required for compliance with Section 15123(b)(2) and 15123(b)(3) of the *California Environmental Quality Act* (CEQA) Guidelines. Additionally, oral and written comments received during the public review period for the IS/NOP indicated that areas of controversy and potential issues to be resolved included the following: (1) aesthetics, (2) air quality, (3) biological resources, (4) cultural resources, (5) geology and seismicity, (6) hydrology, (7) noise, (8) traffic, (9) recreation, and (10) alternatives. These issues are addressed within Section 4.1 (Aesthetics), Section 4.2 (Air Quality), Section 4.3 (Biological Resources), Section 4.4 (Cultural Resources), Section 4.5 (Geology and Soils), Section 4.7 (Hydrology and Water Quality), Section 4.9 (Noise), Section 4.11 (Recreation), Section 4.12 (Transportation/Traffic), and Chapter 6 (Alternatives to the Proposed Project), respectively.