
Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The project proposes development of 31.5 gross acres of currently vacant land bound by First Street on the west, Huntington Street on the east, Atlanta Avenue on the north, and Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) on the south, in the Downtown area of the City of Huntington Beach. The proposed Pacific City project consists of a visitor-serving/neighborhood commercial-retail center, a residential village, and vehicular and pedestrian circulation improvements. Approximately 10.6 net acres of the project site adjacent to PCH would be developed with up to 400 rooms of hospitality (i.e., hotel) and up to 240,000 square feet (sf) of visitor-serving commercial uses that are proposed to include retail, office, restaurant, cultural, and entertainment facilities, with approximately 1,543 parking spaces in a subterranean garage. The approximately 17.2-net-acre northeastern portion of the project site would be developed with 516 condominium homes at an average of 30 dwelling units per net acre, in accordance with density levels set forth in the City of Huntington Beach General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan. A total of 1,341 parking spaces in a subterranean garage and approximately 19 on-site surface parking spaces would be provided to serve this residential component. In addition, pedestrian corridors would be provided through the site to improve pedestrian access between the surrounding residential communities and the proposed residential and commercial components. Several accessways to the beach area south of the project site are also proposed. The proposed project has been designed to conform to the existing land use and zoning designations in the City of Huntington Beach General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan. For a detailed description of the proposed project, refer to Chapter 2 (Project Description) of this document.

1.2 RELATIONSHIP OF PROPOSED PROJECT TO PREVIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

This EIR serves as a project EIR, since it analyzes impacts of a specific development project. This EIR also serves as a Subsequent EIR, since development on the project site has been addressed on a programmatic level as part of the analysis included in several Program EIRs prepared by the City of Huntington Beach. These documents include (1) The Huntington Beach Downtown Specific Plan EIR 82-2 and Addendum to SEIR 82-2; (2) The Huntington Beach General Plan Update EIR 94-1; and (3) The Huntington Beach Redevelopment Project EIR 96-2. Each of these documents includes analysis that accounts for development at the project site. The General Plan Update EIR analyzes the theoretical buildout of the entire City, while

the Redevelopment Project EIR analyzes buildout of the Redevelopment Project Area, which includes 619 acres over five redevelopment sub-areas within the City. The Downtown Specific Plan EIR analyzes buildout of the City's Downtown area, representing the most localized analysis of the area. However, impacts particular to the project site require analysis that was not provided in previous documentation. Therefore, this EIR is considered a Subsequent EIR to the Downtown Specific Plan EIR 82-2.

Section 21166 of the CEQA Guidelines requires preparation of a subsequent EIR due to changes in the existing conditions discussed in the Downtown Specific Plan Area and the proposed project description. Implementation of the proposed project is consistent with the zoning and general plan land use designations for the project site. However, changes with respect to the circumstances under which the project is being undertaken (i.e., changes to existing conditions) and new information, in the form of project details, has become available since the completion of Downtown Specific Plan EIR 82-2. Therefore, impacts particular to the project site require analysis that was not provided in previous documentation. A subsequent EIR is required pursuant to Section 15183(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines, which states:

CEQA mandates that projects which are consistent with the development density established in the existing zoning, community plan, or general plan policies for which an EIR was certified shall not require additional environmental review, except as might be necessary to examine whether there are project-specific significant effects which are peculiar to the project or its site.

In addition to the programmatic environmental documents that consider the ultimate development of the site, a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was prepared to address short-term soil export activities from the project site in conjunction with hotel development located east of the site (31 Acre Site Soil Export, Environmental Assessment No. 99-1). Soil removal activities involved the export of approximately 226,000 cubic yards of soil from the project site. This activity occurred independently of the development currently proposed for the project site. Soil export was completed in 1999, and there are no remaining on-site activities associated with this work.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE EIR

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared to meet all of the substantive and procedural requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970 (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 *et seq.*), California CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 *et seq.*), and the rules, regulations, and procedures for the implementation of CEQA as adopted by the City of Huntington Beach. Accordingly, the City of Huntington Beach has been identified as the Lead Agency for this project, taking primary responsibility for conducting the environmental review and approving or denying the project.

This EIR has been prepared to identify any potentially significant environmental impacts associated with the planning, construction, or operation of the project, as well as appropriate and feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives that would minimize or eliminate these impacts. This document is intended to serve as an informational document, as outlined in Section 15121(a) of the CEQA Guidelines:

An EIR is an informational document which will inform public agency decision-makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effects of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project. The public agency shall consider the information in the EIR along with other information which may be presented to the agency.

The EIR addresses impacts directly or indirectly associated with the proposed project. No other improvements are included in this analysis.

Furthermore, this EIR will provide the primary source of environmental information for the lead, responsible, and trustee agencies to consider when exercising any permitting authority or approval power directly related to implementation of this project.

1.4 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 January 10, 2003, and ended on February 10, 2003. Public agencies included affected State agencies and surrounding cities. In addition, the IS/NOP was sent to interested parties, property owners located within 1000 feet and occupants within 300 feet of the project site. A scoping meeting was held on January 27, 2003. 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 28 written comment letters and 9 oral comments on the IS/NOP. The IS/NOP, as well as the scoping comment letters, are included in Appendix A 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 State CEQA Guidelines. The DEIR is available for review at the following locations:

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

City of Huntington Beach
Central Library
7111 Talbert Avenue
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

City of Huntington Beach
Main Street Library
525 Main Street
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

City of Huntington Beach
City Clerk
2000 Main Street
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

www.ci.huntington-beach.ca.us/CityDepartments/Planning

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

Written comments on the DEIR should be addressed to

Mary Beth Broeren, Principal 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.

1.5 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 NOP review period, and comments received at the scoping meeting.

The environmental issues that are determined to result in potentially significant impacts and, therefore, are addressed in detail in this EIR include the following:

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

Impacts to Agricultural Resources were not identified as significant in the IS (Appendix A). The project site is currently undeveloped, and no environmental changes associated with the proposed project would result in the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. Therefore, in accordance with Section 15128 of the State CEQA Guidelines, this resource is not addressed in this EIR.

1.7 PROJECT SPONSORS AND CONTACT PERSONS

The City of Huntington Beach is the lead agency for the preparation of this EIR. EIP Associates is the environmental consultant to the City and the principal preparer of this EIR. The Applicant for the proposed project is Makallon Atlanta Huntington Beach, LLC. Key contact persons are as follows:

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| Lead Agency | City of Huntington Beach Department of Planning 2000 Main Street Huntington Beach, CA 92648 (714) 536-5271 Attn: Mary Beth Broeren |
| Project Applicant | Makallon Atlanta Huntington Beach, LLC 4100 MacArthur Boulevard, Suite 150 Newport Beach, CA 92660 (949) 255-1100 Attn: Ethen Thacher |
| EIR Consultant | EIP Associates 12301 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 430 Los Angeles, CA 90025 (310) 268-8132 Attn: Terri Vitar, Regional Vice President Marianne Tanzer, Project Manager |

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 section 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 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 3 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 4 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 5 Long-Term Implications—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 6 List of EIR Preparers—This section identifies all individuals responsible for the preparation of this report.

Chapter 7 References—This section identifies all references used and cited in the preparation of this report and the public and private agencies and individuals contacted during the preparation of this report.

1.9 AREAS OF CONTROVERSY AND ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED

The listing of environmental effects, mitigation measures, and alternatives presented in the Executive Summary constitutes the required identification of issues to be resolved and areas of controversy. Areas of controversy and issues to be resolved were raised by agencies or interested parties during the scoping process. The primary issues identified during the scoping process related to the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project on the proposed project site and surrounding area, including changes to existing private views on and through the site from surrounding areas, water quality effects associated with project development, status of oil remediation and cleanup due to previous uses of the site, intersection and roadway impacts due to increased vehicular traffic, potential secondary effects from roadway improvements, changes in land use character from increased development intensity of the area, and short-term construction effects. Appendix A includes all scoping comments received and provides additional information on areas of concern or controversy.