

**LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD REPORT**

January 27, 2022

TO: Board of Library Commissioners

FROM: John F. Szabo, City Librarian

SUBJECT: **REQUEST TO APPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS FOR THE PIO PICO-KOREATOWN BRANCH LIBRARY PARK AND UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE PROJECT**

A. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board of Library Commissioners:

1. Find that, on the basis of the whole administrative record, there is no substantial evidence that the proposed Pio Pico-Koreatown Branch Library Park and Underground Garage Project (Project) will have a significant effect on the environment and that the attached Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the City of Los Angeles (City);
2. Adopt the attached Final Initial Study/MND;
3. Adopt the attached Mitigation Monitoring Program; and
4. Request the Bureau of Engineering (BOE) to report quarterly in writing to the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL) regarding the Mitigation Monitoring Program.

B. FINDINGS

1. California Environmental Quality Act

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), is a statute that requires State and local agencies to identify the significant environmental impacts of their actions and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible.

Most proposals for physical development in California are subject to the provisions of CEQA, as are many governmental decisions which do not immediately result in physical development. Every development project which

requires a discretionary governmental approval will require at least some environmental review pursuant to CEQA, unless an exemption applies.

The required environmental review imposes both procedural and substantive requirements. At a minimum, an initial review of the project and its environmental effects must be conducted.

The proposed Project requires a CEQA environmental review which is described in this report.

2. Initial Study

Under CEQA, a project is evaluated to determine whether the project may have a significant effect on the environment, and if so, whether a Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration should be prepared. This report is called an Initial Study (IS).

For the proposed Project, the IS was prepared by the City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering (BOE), Environmental Management Group.

3. Negative Declaration and Mitigated Negative Declaration

A Negative Declaration (ND) is a document that states upon completion of an Initial Study, that there is no substantial evidence that the project may have a significant effect on the environment.

A Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) is an ND that incorporates revisions and/or mitigation measures in the proposed project that will avoid or mitigate impacts to a point where clearly no significant impacts on the environment would occur; and, that there is no substantial evidence in light of the whole record before the public agency that the project, as revised, may have a significant impact on the environment.

For the proposed Project, the MND is included in the IS and was prepared by the BOE Environmental Management Group. The determination is as follows:

“Based on the analysis provided in this Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND), BOE finds that, with incorporation of described revisions to the Project and mitigation measures, the proposed Project would not have a significant effect on the environment.”

4. A Lead Agency, as defined by CEQA, is the public agency that has the primary responsibility for carrying out or approving a project.

For the proposed Project, the Lead Agency responsible for compliance with CEQA is the Bureau of Engineering. In addition, some enforcement will be provided by the Department of Public Works Bureau of Contract Administration.

5. Mitigation Monitoring Program

An Initial Study may include requirements for mitigation monitoring and reporting to ensure compliance with mitigation measures during project implementation. Mitigation measures are enforced through permit conditions, agreements, or other measures. The Lead Agency reports on and monitors programs for any mitigation measures imposed pursuant to its regulatory authority.

For the proposed Project, the Mitigation Monitoring Program (MMP) was prepared by the BOE Environmental Management Group. Mitigation measures include the impacts of the Project in the following four categories:

- GEO: Geology and Soils
- BIO: Biological Resources
- CUL: Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources
- NOI: Noise

Specifically, the MMP for the proposed Project includes one mitigation measure for GEO, one for BIO, two for CUL and eight for NOI.

6. Summary of Environmental Impacts

The environmental impacts for the Project were found to be less than significant with the mitigation measures identified in the IS/MND and MMP.

Specifically, regarding biological resources, ornamental trees may provide suitable nesting habitat for birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Additionally, noise and dust generated during construction could indirectly impact nesting birds by causing them to avoid the area during construction. Should tree removal and construction activities occur during the nesting bird season, the implementation of the mitigation measure BIO-1 would ensure that no nesting birds protected under the MBTA are significantly affected.

Regarding cultural resources, there are no known cultural resources located on-site. However, there is the potential to encounter previously unknown cultural resources during construction. Mitigation measures CUL-1, CUL-2, and GEO-1 are provided to address the potential discovery of previously unknown archaeological, paleontological, or tribal cultural resources.

Mitigation measures NOI-1 through NOI-8 would be required to ensure that impacts related to construction noise would be less than significant. Implementation of these mitigation measures would ensure that potentially significant impacts would be less than significant.

A more detailed explanation of the mitigation measures is included in the Mitigation Monitoring Program prepared by BOE and attached to this report.

7. Oversight by the Board of Library Commissioners

The Pio Pico-Koreatown Branch Library is owned and operated by the Los Angeles Public Library and is located at 694 S. Oxford Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90005.

Pursuant to the Los Angeles City Charter, Section 534, the Board of Library Commissioners (Board) "shall have full control over all library sites and none of these sites shall be devoted to any other purpose in whole or in part without permission from the board." Therefore, the Board is authorized to adopt environmental recommendations regarding LAPL properties such as the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration attached to this report.

8. Public Outreach

The proposed Project Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration was circulated for a twenty (20) day public review period, beginning on August 1, 2019 and concluding on August 21, 2019. The Bureau of Engineering received four comment letters during this period and responded to these comments in the Final IS/MND. Copies of the document were and are still available for review at the following locations:

Pio Pico-Koreatown Branch Library,
694 S. Oxford Ave
Los Angeles CA, 90005

Los Angeles Central Library,
630 W. 5th Street,
Los Angeles, CA 90071

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Council District 10 Office,
200 N. Spring Street, Room 430,
Los Angeles, CA 90012

City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering,
EMG,
1149 S. Broadway, Suite 600,
Los Angeles, CA 90015

Attachments: Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration
Mitigation Monitoring Program

LAPL Project Manager: Joyce Cooper, Director of Branches

Reviewed by: Susan Broman, Assistant City Librarian
Emily Fate, Assistant Director of Branches
Paul Montgomerie, Principal Librarian
Eloisa Sarao, Director of Facilities and Event Management
Madeleine M. Rackley, Business Manager
Heather Smith, Assistant Business Manager

The environmental review of the proposed Project was conducted using an early design for the park. With input from the public, LAPL and the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP), the design has changed and no longer includes many of the original elements. Since the Final IS/MND refers to some of the elements that have been removed from the Project, LAPL requests BOE to work with LAPL and RAP to remove those items from the Final IS/MND before construction begins.