1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the purpose and focus of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (“Draft EIR”) for the proposed Vermont Corridor Project (the “Project”), a discussion of the public review process, and a description of the organization of the Draft EIR.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

The County of Los Angeles (the “County”) has prepared this Draft EIR for the following purposes:

- To satisfy the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) (Public Resources Code [“PRC”] Section 21000, et seq.), and the State CEQA Guidelines (“CEQA Guidelines”, California Code of Regulations [CCR], Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15000, et seq.).
- To inform public agency decision makers and the public of the potential significant environmental effects of the Project, as well as possible ways to minimize any significant effects, and reasonable alternatives to the Project.
- To enable the County to consider environmental consequences when deciding whether to approve the Project.

The Project will require discretionary approvals by the County and other governmental agencies. In this context, the term Project refers to the whole of the actions that are evaluated in this Draft EIR, including the redevelopment of three Project Sites (as defined below) and all associated activities. Therefore, the Project is subject to environmental review requirements under CEQA. The County, by its Community Development Commission (“CDC”), is identified as the “Lead Agency” for the Project in accordance with Sections 15051 and 15367 of the CEQA Guidelines, which define the Lead Agency as the public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project.

The subject of this EIR is the Vermont Corridor Project, which involves three County-owned properties located in the “Vermont Corridor”. These three properties are collectively referred to as the “Project Sites”. The Vermont Corridor is identified as the area located on South Vermont Avenue between 4th Street and 6th Street, in the City of Los Angeles (the “City”). The three Project Sites are generally located at the following addresses: Site 1, located at 510, 526, and 532 South Vermont Avenue and 523 Shatto Place; Site 2, located at 550 South Vermont Avenue and 3175 West 6th Street; and Site 3, located at 433 South Vermont Avenue. References to individual Sites (e.g., Site 1, Site 2, etc.) refer only to the respective Site.

As described in Section 15121 (a) and 15362 of the CEQA Guidelines, an EIR is an informational document that informs public agency decision-makers and the public of any potential significant environmental effects of a project, identifies possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describes reasonable alternatives to the project. Thus, the purpose of this EIR is to focus the discussion on those potential environmental effects of the Project that the Lead Agency has determined could be significant. In addition, where applicable, feasible mitigation measures are recommended that could reduce or avoid the significant environmental impacts of the Project.

This EIR was prepared in accordance with Section 15151 of the CEQA Guidelines, which defines the standards for EIR adequacy 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.

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

Notice of Preparation

The CDC initiated the County's CEQA review process for the Project through the issuance of a Notice of Preparation (“NOP”) as required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15082. The NOP for the Project EIR was prepared by the CDC, and distributed to the State Clearinghouse, Office of Planning and Research, responsible agencies, and other interested parties on May 4, 2017. The NOP was also distributed to owners and occupants of properties located within 500 feet of the Project Sites, and included instructions for obtaining a translated version of the NOP in Spanish or Korean. The NOP solicited comments from responsible and trustee agencies, as well as interested parties, on the scope of the EIR. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day scoping period that ended on June 5, 2017. A public scoping meeting was held on May 25, 2017.

The Notice of Preparation is included in Appendix 1-1 to this Draft EIR. Written comments provided in response to the NOP, and comments provided at the scoping meeting, are included in Appendix 1-2 to this Draft EIR. Issues raised during the NOP period included suggestions for the preparation of the air quality, traffic, and land use analyses for the Project, requirements related to wastewater, storm water, and solid waste related to the Project, potential impacts to a nearby school, impacts to transit facilities and services, and requirements related to fire protection related to the Project. Issues raised during the scoping meeting included the parking supply to be provided by the project, the amount of affordable housing to be provided by the Project, the size of the community recreation center that would be included in the Project, the removal of trees, and the reconfiguration of the 6th Street and Vermont Avenue intersection and removal of parking to provide a pedestrian promenade. Appendix I-2 includes a summary matrix of comments raised during the NOP period and during the scoping meeting and the section of the Draft EIR where the issues raised are addressed. In addition, direct outreach to community organizations, neighborhood councils, and elected officials was undertaken throughout the period in which the Draft EIR was prepared.

Environmental Issues Assessed in the EIR

Based on agency and public comments in response to the NOP and a review of environmental issues, this EIR includes analyses of the following environmental topics:

- Aesthetics (Aesthetics/Views, Shade/Shadow, Light/Glare)
- Air Quality
- Cultural Resources (Historical Resources, Archaeological Resources, Paleontological Resources)
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
1.0 Introduction

Potential environmental effects in the areas of Agricultural Resources, Biological Resources, and Mineral Resources, as well as other specific areas related to the topics listed above, were determined to be either less than significant or no impact and, therefore, are not evaluated in greater detail in the EIR. These areas are addressed in Section 6.5, Effects Not Found to be Significant, of the Draft EIR. An Initial Study was not prepared for the Project as permitted by CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(d) because the Lead Agency determined it would require an environmental impact report for the Project rather than a mitigated negative declaration.

Agency and Public Review and Comment on the Draft EIR

This Draft EIR was prepared under the direction and supervision of the Lead Agency and reflects the independent judgment of the Lead Agency. This Draft EIR has been subjected to an internal department review prior to release for agency and public review. The Draft EIR will be circulated for review and comment by the public and other interested parties, agencies, and organizations for 50 calendar days, longer than required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15105. During this public review and comment period, interested public agencies, organizations and individuals may submit written comments concerning the Project or the Draft EIR, or obtain instructions for obtaining a translated version of the Draft EIR summary in Spanish or Korean by email or U.S. mail to:

Mr. Chris Lopez
Development Specialist, Special Projects
Community Development Commission, County of Los Angeles
700 West Main Street
Alhambra, CA 91801
Tel: 626-586-1550
Email: CLopez@labtc.org

A public hearing on recommendations for action on the EIR and the Project will be held before the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (the “Board”). After the review and comment period, written responses to all written comments will be prepared as part of the Final EIR. As required by CEQA, responses to comments submitted by responsible public agencies will be distributed to those agencies for review prior to consideration of the Final Environmental Impact Report (“Final EIR”) by the Board. Upon completion of the Final EIR and other required documentation, the Board may adopt findings relative to the Project’s environmental effects and a statement of overriding considerations, certify the EIR, and approve the Project.
1.3 ORGANIZATION OF THE DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR is organized into nine chapters as follows:

1.0 (Introduction): This chapter briefly discusses the purpose of the Draft EIR, identifies the environmental issues assessed in the Draft EIR, and describes the environmental review process for the public and other agencies and organizations, and describes the organization of this Draft EIR.

2.0 (Executive Summary): This chapter provides a summary of the Project description, comments received during the NOP review period and during the scoping meeting, areas of controversy, alternatives to the Project, and environmental impacts, project design features, regulatory requirements, and mitigation measures.

3.0 (Project Description and Environmental Setting): This chapter provides a detailed description of the Project, including Project location, Project objectives, Project characteristics, intended use of this Draft EIR, required discretionary actions, and a description of the environmental setting of the Project Sites.

4.0 (Environmental Impact Analysis): This chapter is a primary focus of this EIR. Each environmental topic section contains a discussion of existing conditions for the project area, an assessment and discussion of the significance of impacts associated with the Project, an assessment of cumulative impacts, an identification of mitigation measures where applicable, and a discussion of level of impact significance after mitigation, where applicable.

5.0 (Alternatives): This chapter includes an assessment of a reasonable range of alternatives to the Project. The range of alternatives selected is based on their ability to feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the proposed Project and to avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the Project.

6.0 (Other CEQA Considerations): This chapter provides a discussion of significant unavoidable impacts that would result from the proposed Project, and the reasons why the Project is being proposed notwithstanding the significant unavoidable impacts. An analysis of the significant irreversible changes in the environment also is presented. In addition, this chapter analyzes the Project’s potential growth-inducing impacts, which could foster economic or population growth or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Finally, a discussion of possible effects of the Project that were determined not to be significant is provided.

7.0 (List of Preparers of the EIR and Persons Consulted): This chapter lists the persons who contributed to the preparation of this Draft EIR.

8.0 (Acronyms, Abbreviations, and Terminology): This chapter provides definitions for all of the acronyms and abbreviations used in this Draft EIR.

9.0 (References): This chapter provides a list of references used in this Draft EIR.