



Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)

Warner Center Specific Plan Update

DATE: June 8, 2009

TO: Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties

FROM: City of Los Angeles – Department of City Planning

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)

PROJECT TITLE / CASE NO.: WARNER CENTER SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATE / ENV-2008-3471-EIR

The City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning requests your views on the scope and content of the DEIR for the Warner Center Specific Plan Update.

PROJECT LOCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING:

The Warner Center Specific Plan (WCSP) project area is located in the southwestern corner of the San Fernando Valley in the City of Los Angeles (see Figure No. 1). The WCSP project area is currently bounded generally by Vanowen Street to the north, the Ventura Freeway to the south, De Soto Avenue to the east, and Topanga Canyon Blvd. on the west (see Figure No. 2). The WCSP project area comprises approximately 924 acres or 1.5 square miles and is developed with retail, residential, commercial, hospital, open space, office, manufacturing, and hotel uses. Staff is considering expanding the Specific Plan area up to the Los Angeles River.

Similar to the WCSP area, the surrounding area is developed and supports a variety of land uses. The area surrounding the site contains single and multi-family residential, commercial, retail, institutional, and open space uses. Typical to most urban areas, retail uses are located along the major thoroughfares in the area, including Topanga Canyon Boulevard.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

In the mid-1980s a community-based effort was initiated to create a Master Development Plan to balance commercial and residential growth, thus reducing traffic impacts in the region and providing design and aesthetic standards for the Warner Center area. That effort culminated in the adoption of the Warner Center Specific Plan (WCSP -- Ordinance Nos. 168873 and 168984) by the City Council in June 1993. Changes and amendments to the plan were adopted in 1997, 2000 and 2001. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

for the Warner Center Specific Plan was certified in 1993 (State Clearing House No. 90-011055). The EIR analyzed 21.5 million square feet of commercial space and 3,000 residential units in Phase I (2010). The Specific Plan required that further environmental review be conducted in 2011 prior to implementation of Phase II. When the Specific Plan was adopted in 1993, commercial growth in Warner Center was higher than residential growth. In order to encourage residential growth and create more balanced development, transportation fees and other restrictions were not required on residential projects as they were on commercial and industrial development. The 1993 WCSP limited Phase I commercial development to 21.5 million square feet, however, there was no limit on the residential units allowed -- except that the EIR only analyzed 3,000 units and therefore development in excess of the 3,000 units was required to conduct additional environmental analysis.

As residential development outpaced that anticipated for 2010 (3,000 units were reached in 2005, while commercial development remained at about 17.5 million square feet), the community became concerned with this unanticipated development and associated impacts. In addition the community and the Woodland Hills Warner Center Neighborhood Council were concerned that design and aesthetic standards in the 1993 Specific Plan were minimal. To address these concerns Interim Regulations were adopted in 2005 to limit new residential growth until the Specific Plan could be updated. At the same time, Council initiated a motion to restudy the current plan. As part of this motion a Citizen's Advisory Committee was formed to advise City of Los Angeles Planning Department staff on planning, development and quality of life issues in Warner Center and to provide input to the Warner Center Specific Plan Update. The Warner Center Specific Plan Update is being developed to address: 1) previously identified concerns, 2) the environmental analysis required by the 1993 plan, and 3) new planning and regulatory requirements associated with sustainability and reducing regional greenhouse gas emissions.

Details of the Warner Center Specific Plan Update will be developed in concert with the environmental review process so as to incorporate environmental concerns in to the plan. The overview of the Warner Center Specific Plan Update is presented below. The EIR will analyze anticipated development impacts for the year 2035.

Overview - Warner Center Specific Plan Update 2009

1. Key Development Goals. Warner Center shall be an economically competitive community with a concentration of jobs, housing, services, transit, and public infrastructure to support a true regional center.

- A. By 2035 more than double the Jobs from 40,000 to 89,000+;
- B. By 2035 add between 15,000 and 20,000 new residential units;
- C. Encourage sustainability; meet or exceed regulatory requirements; and
- D. All of Warner Center will be a Transit Oriented District (TOD) through enhanced transit.
(The definition of what will be considered a TOD will be included in the Specific Plan.)

2. New Streets. Provide new publicly accessible private, local serving, streets and shared, publicly accessible fire access roads in the form of private streets or pedestrian paseos.

3. Development Intensity.

- A. No Density (lot area/unit) limitation. The minimum unit size shall be 400 square feet.
- B. Base Floor Area Ratio (FAR) maximum of 3:1 for projects within proposed TOD areas and a base FAR maximum of 1.5:1 for projects in non-TOD areas. The goal of the plan is to provide an internal transit system that connects most parcels in Warner Center to the Orange Line and Ventura Rapid Bus with 10-minute headways during peak commute periods and 15-minute headways during non-peak business hours, so that all of Warner Center is in a TOD.

- C. Allow for development intensity bonuses (i.e. FAR) for projects in TOD areas.
- D. No height limit throughout the Plan area, except the transitional height ordinance would be applied west of Topanga Canyon and north of Vanowen.

4. Land Use. It is proposed that the existing Specific Plan area be divided into seven (7) districts;

Uptown – Mixed-use

Northeast Residential – Urban residential

Downtown – Mixed-use, designed to have architectural variation and a walkable scale

Eastside – Live-work

Southwest – Residential land use

Business Park – Business park (maintenance of existing setbacks)

Topanga West – Retail and other commercial uses

Warner Center is proposed to have a mix of uses to promote a jobs/housing balance. These uses would have access to regional transit, aggregated, publicly accessible open space, local services, neighborhood serving retail and other land uses promoting walk ability and transit use. The proposed Warner Center Specific Plan will identify a cap in development for the year 2035 or the amount of development anticipated for that year based on current economic/market analyses — whichever came first. Development beyond this cap will require additional environmental review (the plan itself would not necessarily have to be revised). While development would be capped at the level anticipated for the year 2035, the Specific Plan would allow for considerable flexibility as to where development would occur, and would plan for development beyond the year 2035. Also, staff is considering expanding the Specific Plan area up to the Los Angeles River either in a new district or in one or more of the above described districts.

5. Transportation. A fundamental component of the revised Specific Plan will be a combination of transportation improvement strategies designed to reduce vehicle trips and vehicle miles travelled and increase the average vehicle ridership and transit usage. The transportation component of the existing Specific Plan relies heavily on substantial mitigation funding from commercial and industrial projects only. The revised Specific Plan will propose “fair share” mitigation plans funded by all anticipated development and will encourage transit oriented development around existing and proposed regional transit systems through land use and transportation incentives. The type of mitigation measures desired in the new Specific Plan have shifted to more transit-oriented solutions, non-motorized trips, mixed use development, and measures to reduce automobile trips and vehicle miles traveled. As with the original Plan, Transportation Demand Management measures will be an additional tool in order to reduce vehicle trips and miles traveled and increase average vehicle ridership. Also, to mitigate potential significant traffic impacts, it is anticipated that mitigation measure program may provide for transportation system improvements including, but not be limited to, new travel through lanes and turn lanes, new traffic signals and signal modifications, automobile/pedestrian bridges and underpasses, signalization improvements, street restriping, dedicated turn lanes, public parking lots and structures, changes to street designations and street centerline alignments, additional transit service and changes to existing service, freeway interchange improvements, bike lanes, and small slow vehicle lanes.

6. Parking. Parking is proposed to be regulated as part of a comprehensive Transportation Demand Management strategy. Consideration will be given to shared, off-site, reduced, and other appropriate parking strategies.

7. Open Space. Publicly accessible open space would be required in association with development, with incentives for the aggregation of required on-site open space into larger open space areas.

8. Street and Design Standards. Provide street dedications/easements/setbacks for the following Warner Center streets including, but not limited to: Topanga Canyon Boulevard; Owensmouth Avenue; Canoga Avenue; Variel Avenue; De Soto Avenue; Vanowen Street; Victory Boulevard; Erwin Street;

Oxnard Street; Califa Street; and Burbank Boulevard. Other secondary, collector streets, and local streets will also be studied, as well as new private streets.

9. Urban Design Standards and Guidelines. The proposed Specific Plan would include design guidelines to address the private and public realm. Issues to be addressed include sustainability (neighborhood design and green development), ground floor treatment (retail storefronts, common open space, residential entries), parking structures (integration, landscaping), massing and street wall (building proportions, sidewalk environment), towers (minimum spacing, simple slender forms, human scale at the street).

10. Sign Requirements. As part of the Urban Design Standards and Guidelines, the Warner Center Specific Plan will include comprehensive sign requirements to facilitate the creation of a sense of place through unique quality, theme or character special sign regulations that convey a unified design or architectural theme. The sign requirements of the Specific Plan will also be designed to improve the visual environment through sign limitations regulating the number, individual size, cumulative size, and style.

11. Other. Public art would be required. Development and/or Design Review Boards may be proposed in order to implement provisions of the Plan.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: The following topics have been identified in an Initial Study to be analyzed in detail in the DEIR: Traffic, Circulation and Parking; Land Use; Aesthetic Impacts; Air Quality; Noise; Geology and Soils; Hazards; Water Resources; Energy; Historic, Archeological and Paleontological Resources; Population and Housing; Public Services and Utilities, and Growth Inducing Impacts. A copy of an Initial Study is not attached.

SCOPING MEETING: A scoping meeting will be held for the project on **Monday, June 22, 2009 at 5:30 p.m.** The scoping meeting location will be at:

Kaiser Permanente Hospital - Auditorium B, Entrance #5,
5601 De Soto Avenue,
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

The circulation period for the NOP will be 30 days from Monday, June 8, 2009 to Wednesday, July 8, 2009. Written comments should be received by **Wednesday, July 8, 2009 at 4:30 p.m.** Please send written comments to the following contact and address:

Tom Glick, City Planner
City Planning Department -Valley Office
6262 Van Nuys Boulevard, Room 351
Van Nuys, CA 91401

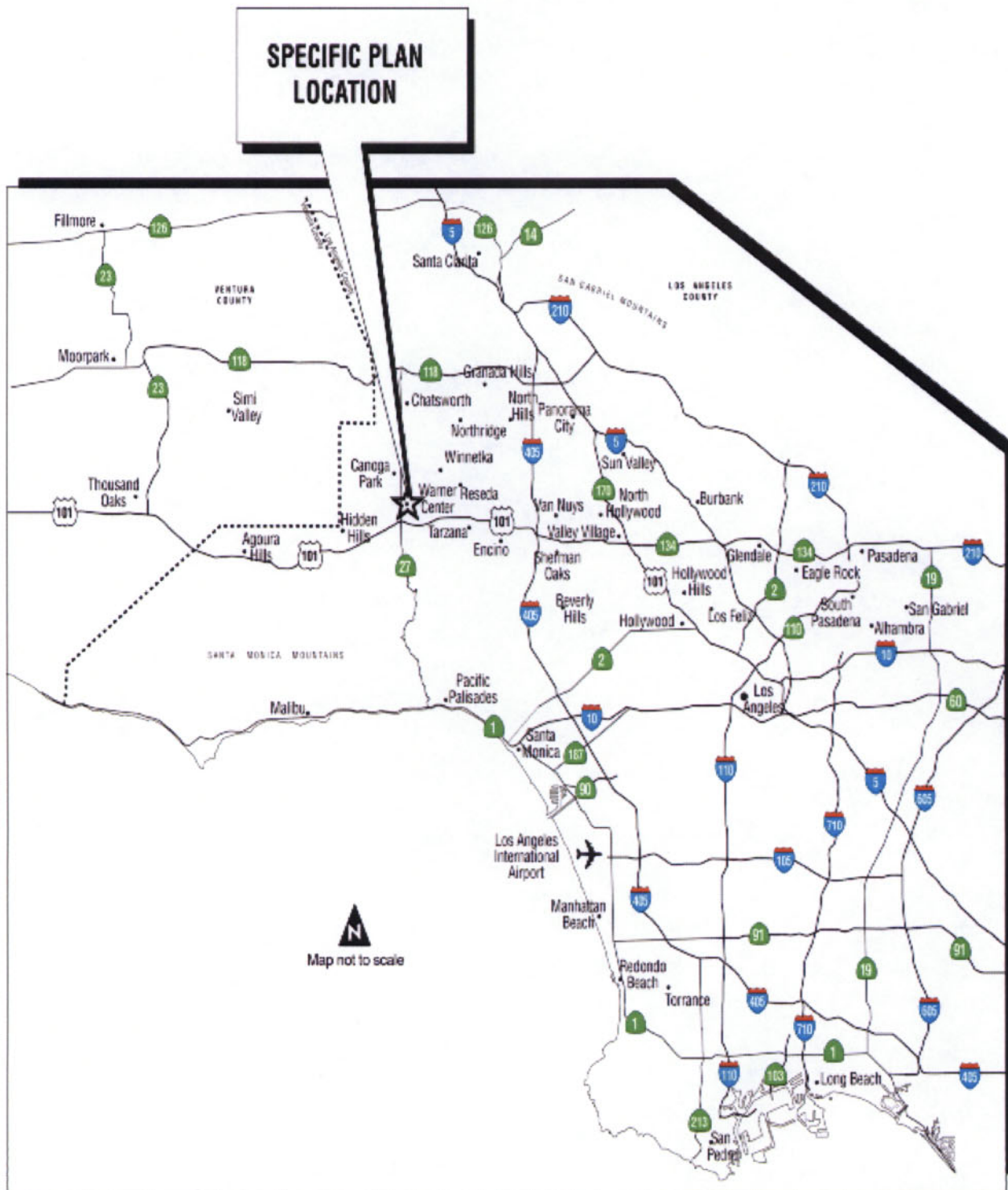
Your comments may also be sent by e-mail to Tom.Glick@lacity.org; please write "**Warner Center Specific Plan NOP Comment**" in the subject line. Tom can also be reached by phone at 818-374-5062.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than **Wednesday, July 8, 2009.**

AGENCY RESPONSE TO THIS NOP: The City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning requests your agency's views on the scope and content of the environmental information relevant to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the project. Your agency may need to use the EIR when considering any permit or other approval that your agency must issue for the project.

FIGURE 1

WARNER CENTER SPECIFIC PLAN DEIR (JUNE 2009)



WARNER CENTER SPECIFIC PLAN DEIR (JUNE 2009)

