# 4. Environmental Setting

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to provide, pursuant to provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines, a "description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time the notice of preparation is published, from both a local and a regional perspective." The environmental setting will provide a set of baseline physical conditions from which the lead agency will determine the significance of environmental impacts resulting from the proposed project.

## 4.2 REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The proposed project is in the City of Monterey Park in central Los Angeles County. Monterey Park is bordered by the cities of East Los Angeles to the west, Los Angeles and Alhambra on the north, Rosemead on the east, and Montebello on the east and south. This area of Los Angeles County is mostly urbanized, with few areas of undeveloped open space. The San Gabriel Mountains are approximately eight miles to the north of the City of Monterey Park and form the northern boundary of the San Gabriel Valley, in which the City lies.

### 4.2.1 Regional Location

The proposed project sits on the southern boundary of the City of Monterey Park, north of SR-60. The northeastern and northwestern portions of the project site border Southern California Edison (SCE) easements in the City of Montebello. Beyond the SCE easements on the northeast are residential land uses and the Resurrection Cemetery in the City of Montebello. Beyond the SCE easement on the northwest are industrial (SCE Mesa Substation) and office land uses. To the south of the project site, south of SR-60, is the 145-acre south parcel of the Operating Industries, Inc. (OII) landfill.

Potrero Grande Drive runs in a general northeast to southwest direction to the northwest of the project site. Greenwood Avenue intersects Potrero Grande Drive and extends south to the north project site property line where it turns right, travels along the property line, crosses SR-60, and dead-ends in the south parcel of the OII landfill. Paramount Boulevard runs north to south east of the project site, intersecting SR-60.

### 4.2.2 Regional Planning Considerations

#### Air Quality Management Plan

The South coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) and the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) are the agencies responsible for preparing the air quality management plan (AQMP) for the South Coast Air Basin (SoCAB). Since 1979, a number of AQMPs have been prepared. The most recent was adopted on June 1, 2007, and incorporates significant new scientific data, primarily in the form of updated emissions inventories, ambient measurements, new meteorological episodes, and new air quality modeling tools. The 2007 AQMP proposes attainment demonstration of the federal $PM_{2.5}$ standards through a more focused control of $SO_X$, directly emitted $PM_{2.5}$, and focused control of $NO_X$ and VOC by 2015. The eight-hour ozone control strategy builds upon the $PM_{2.5}$ strategy, augmented with additional $NO_X$ and VOC reductions to meet the standard by 2024, assuming a bump-up (i.e., extended attainment date) is obtained.

The AQMP provides local guidance for the State Implementation Plan, which provides the framework for air quality basins to achieve attainment of the state and federal ambient air quality standards. Areas that meet ambient air quality standards (AAQS) are classified as attainment areas, while areas that do not meet these standards are classified as nonattainment areas. Severity classifications for nonattainment range in magnitude: marginal, moderate, serious, severe, and extreme. The attainment status for the SoCAB is described in Section 5.1, *Air Quality*. The SoCAB is designated as attainment of the California AAQS for $SO_2$, lead, and sulfates. According to the 2007 AQMP, the SoCAB will have to meet the new federal $PM_{2.5}$ standards by 2015 and the 8-hour ozone standard by 2024, and will most likely have to achieve the recently revised 24-hour $PM_{2.5}$ standard by 2020. The SCAQMD has recently designated the SoCAB as nonattainment for $NO_2$ (entire basin) and lead (Los Angeles County only) under the California AAQS and attainment/maintenance for $PM_{10}$ under the national AAQS.

## *4.3 LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING*

The proposed project site is in the San Gabriel Valley, on the northern side of the Montebello Hills (also referred to as the Merced Hills). Past development on the site and in the surrounding area has altered the terrain of the area, resulting in a relatively flat project site. The sparse onsite vegetation consists mainly of annual, nonnative grasses and herbaceous plants. The majority of the surrounding area is developed with industrial, office, commercial, and residential land uses. Adjacent to and south of the proposed project site is SR-60, which runs east to west, dividing the north and south parcels of the former OII landfill.

### *4.3.1 Location and Land Use*

The 51.1-acre project site is the northern portion of a former 190-acre landfill, now owned by OII. The north and south parcels of the landfill are divided by SR-60, and the western 10 acres of the project site is part of the north parcel. The remainder of the site has been used for various industrial activities and, at one point, for oil and gas production, with similar operations in the surrounding area. Between 1948 and 1952, the landfill portion of the project site was operated as a municipal waste disposal facility by the City of Monterey Park. In 1952, the landfill was purchased by OII and has been inactive since 1984.It was listed on the National Priorities List (NPL) as a Superfund Site in 1986. In 1998, as a result of a voter initiative, the project site was rezoned from M-Manufacturing to an R-S (PD)-Regional Specialty Center (Planned Development) Overlay Zone, which allows for a variety of retail, office, service, and restaurant businesses, as described in Chapter 21.24.030 of the Monterey Park Municipal Code. The General Plan land use for the project site is C-Commercial.

A leachate treatment plant (LTP) operates on the project site and processes the collected leachate from the south parcel. A by-product of the leachate treatment process is gas, which is routed to the OII main station flare on the south parcel through a 12-inch PVC pipe. Landfill gas from both the north and south parcels is treated at this flare. A thermal destruction facility (TDF) was constructed adjacent to the LTP after the 2000 MPTP EIR was certified on the south to improve leachate treatment and control the amount of gas released. The TDF structure includes two 60-foot stacks, both approximately 6 feet in diameter.

### *4.3.2 Site Characteristics*

The visual character of the City of Monterey Park is generally urban and developed with a few areas of open space or parkland. The project site is surrounded by industrial and office land uses, electrical easements, SR-60, a cemetery, and some low density residential land uses. The site does not offer any visual resources itself and there are limited views from the project site. The site is mostly vacant but shows signs of previous development and it has a general industrial appearance. The main onsite features are a large gravel pile and the LTP and TRF used to treat the landfill gas and leachate.

Although the City of Monterey Park has a number of parks and historic landmarks that may represent unique scenic resources, there are none in the vicinity of the proposed project site. The project site is surrounded by industrial and office land uses, electrical easements, SR-60, a cemetery, and some low density residential land uses. There are no unique features, such as trees, rock outcroppings, historic sites, or other landmarks.

### *4.3.3 Climate and Air Quality*

#### Climate Characteristics

The project site lies within the SoCAB, which includes all of Orange County and the nondesert portions of Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties. The air basin is in a coastal plain with connecting broad valleys and low hills and is bounded by the Pacific Ocean in the southwest quadrant, with high mountains forming the remainder of the perimeter. The general region lies in the semipermanent high-pressure zone of the eastern Pacific. As a result, the climate is mild, tempered by cool sea breezes. This usually mild weather pattern is interrupted infrequently by periods of extremely hot weather, winter storms, and Santa Ana winds.

The annual average temperature varies little throughout the SoCAB, ranging from the low to middle 60s, measured in degrees Fahrenheit (°F). With a more pronounced oceanic influence, coastal areas show less variability in annual minimum and maximum temperatures than inland areas. The climatological station nearest to the site is the San Gabriel Fire Department Monitoring Station. The average low is reported at 41.8°F in January while the average high is 89.7°F in August (WRCC 2010). Rainfall is seasonal, with the majority of it falling between November and April. Rainfall averages 17.24 inches per year in the project area (WRCC 2010).

#### Air Quality

The air pollutants emitted into the ambient air by stationary and mobile sources are regulated by federal and state law. Air pollutants are known as “criteria air pollutants” and are categorized into primary and secondary pollutants. Primary air pollutants are those that are emitted directly from sources. Carbon monoxide (CO), volatile organic compounds (VOC), nitrogen oxides ($NO_X$), sulfur dioxide ($SO_2$), coarse inhalable particulate matter ($PM_{10}$), fine inhalable particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$), and lead (Pb) are primary air pollutants. Of these, CO, $SO_2$, $NO_x$, $PM_{10}$, and $PM_{2.5}$ are criteria pollutants. VOC and $NO_X$ are criteria pollutant precursors and go on to form secondary criteria pollutants through chemical and photochemical reactions in the atmosphere. Ozone ($O_3$) and nitrogen dioxide ($NO_2$) are the principal secondary pollutants.

#### Regulatory Framework

The project site is subject to the rules and regulations imposed by the SCAQMD. The SCAQMD reports to the California Air Resources Board (CARB), and all criteria emissions are also governed by the California and national AAQS. The air quality regulations applicable to the proposed project are described in detail in Section 5.2, *Air Quality*.

### *4.3.4 Noise*

The City of Monterey Park regulates noise through the City of Monterey Park Municipal Code, Chapter 9.53, Noise. The City of Monterey Park is impacted by a multitude of noise sources, many of them directly connected with major arterials that divide the City. Mobile sources of noise, especially cars and trucks, are the most common and significant sources of noise in most communities. The project site is adjacent to SR-60, which is the dominant noise source affecting the project site and adjacent land uses.

Certain land uses are particularly sensitive to noise and vibration. These uses include residential, school, and open space/recreation areas where quiet environments are necessary for enjoyment, public health, and safety. Adjacent office, commercial, and industrial land uses surrounding the project site are not considered noise/vibration-sensitive land uses. Noise/vibration-sensitive land uses include the Resurrection Cemetery to the northeast of the site along Potrero Grande Drive and single- and multifamily residences in the cities of Montebello, Rosemead, and Monterey Park that surround the site. The nearest residential land uses are approximately 500 feet northeast of the eastern corner of the project site.

### *4.3.5 Public Services and Utilities*

Public services include police and fire protections, public school service, and other public service providers, such as libraries. For fire and police services, the project site would be served by the Monterey Park Fire Department and the Monterey Park Police Department. School and library services would not be required since the proposed project does not include housing. The initial study for the proposed project, included as Appendix A to this SEIR, determined that project-related impacts to public services would be less than significant.

Utilities include water, wastewater, and solid waste service providers. The project site is currently not served by water or wastewater conveyance systems. The nearest water pipeline is an eight-inch pipeline at the intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Saturn Street. There is also an existing eight-inch wastewater pipeline at the intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Potrero Grande Drive. This City-maintained line directs sewer water to a twelve-inch trunk sewer at the intersection of Wilcox Avenue and Pomona Boulevard. The trunk sewer is maintained by the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County. Wastewater generated on the project site would be conveyed to the Joint Water Pollution Control Plant at 24501 South Figueroa Street in the City of Carson. This plant treats over 300 million gallons of wastewater per day (Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County 2010).

### *4.3.6 General Plan and Zoning*

In 1998, the project site zoning was changed from M – Manufacturing to R-S (PD) – Regional Specialty Center – Planned Development Overlay Zone. The General Plan land use designation is Commercial. The R-S (PD) Overlay Zone allows a variety of retail, service, and restaurant uses, as described in Chapter 21.24 of the Monterey Park Municipal Code. All development projects in the R-S (PD) Overlay Zone must submit a Precise Plan and be approved by the Monterey Park Planning Commission.

The Commercial land use designation in the Monterey Park General Plan allows for retail and specialty office and service businesses that meet the needs of the City's residents and regional customers.

## *4.4 ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS*

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines states that cumulative impacts shall be discussed where they are significant. It further states that this discussion shall reflect the level and severity of the impact and the likelihood of occurrence, but not in as great a level of detail as that necessary for the project alone. Section 15355 of the Guidelines defines cumulative impacts to be "…two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts." Cumulative impacts represent the change caused by the incremental impact of a project when added to other proposed or committed projects in the vicinity.

The CEQA Guidelines (Section 15130 (b)(1)) state that the information utilized in an analysis of cumulative impacts should come from one of two sources, either:

A. A list of past, present and probable future projects producing related cumulative impacts, including, if necessary, those projects outside the control of the agency; or

B. A summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document designed to evaluate regional or area-wide conditions.

The cumulative impact analyses contained in this DEIR uses method A and B for the 2015 Project Buildout Year and the Year 2025 Condition consistent with the Los Angeles County Congestion Management Program (CMP) requirements. The surrounding cities were contacted to get a list of cumulative projects, if any, proposed within their jurisdiction. The cumulative projects which have the potential to cumulatively interact with the proposed project are shown on Table 4-1.

***Table 4-1***
***Cumulative Projects List***

| *Project Type* | *Location* | *Project Size* |
|---|---|---|
| **City of Rosemead** | | |
| Shopping Center | Southwest corner of Walnut Grove Avenue and Rush Street | 4,652 square feet |
| Hotel | 888 Montebello Boulevard | 52 rooms |
| **City of Montebello** | | |
| Montebello Hills Specific Plan | Between Montebello Boulevard and East Lincoln Avenue south of SR-60 | 1,200 residential units |
| **Los Angeles County** | | |
| Day Care Center | 1630 Del Mar Avenue | 14 Students |

Source: Montebello Hills Specific Plan EIR, 2009.

The cumulative base traffic, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and noise projections include two elements: 1) increase in existing traffic volumes due to overall regional growth; and, 2) traffic generated by specific developments expected to be constructed by the Year 2015 and Year 2025 in the vicinity of proposed project. In addition to the cumulative projects listed above, a 1 percent growth factor per year was applied to traffic volumes though the general plan buildout year of 2025. This is consistent with the growth projected for the SCAG's San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments (SGVCOG) Subregion in the adopted 2008 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), as shown in Table 4-2.

As shown on Table 4-2, the adopted SCAG Growth Forecasts for the SGVCOG Subregion project a population growth rate of approximately 12 percent over the next 15 years (0.8 percent per year), a housing growth rate of approximately 6 percent (0.4 percent per year), and an employment growth rate of 13 percent (0.87 percent per year). All three growth rates are less than 1 percent per year and are therefore consistent with the growth factor applied to traffic volumes through buildout year 2025.

***Table 4-2***
***SCAG Growth Forecasts,***
***Southeast San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments Subregion***

| | *Existing 2010* | *SGVCOG Growth Forecast 2025* | *Percent Growth (2010–2025)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Population | 1,998,852 | 2,238,951 | 12% |
| Housing Units | 575,957 | 648,956 | 6% |
| Employment | 809,846 | 858,609 | 13% |

Source: SCAG 2008 RTP.

Pursuant to Section 15130 (b)(1)(A) and (B) of the CEQA Guidelines, the cumulative impacts of the proposed project are discussed in the topical sections of Chapter 5 of this SEIR.