

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. The description of the environmental setting shall be no longer than is necessary to provide a meaningful context for the understanding of the significant effects of the proposed project, its alternatives, and mitigation measures.

4.2 REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project site is in the City of San Marino, which is bordered by the cities of Pasadena to the north and west, South Pasadena to the west, Alhambra and San Gabriel to the south, and unincorporated Los Angeles County to the east. The City of San Marino covers approximately 3.75 square miles. The terrain is characterized by low hills and canyon areas, mainly in the northwest, as well as areas with relatively flat land. The foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains are approximately four miles north.

The City of San Marino is fully built out, primarily with residential uses. Other land uses in San Marino include commercial, recreational open space, and community and public/institutional uses. There are no industrial uses or wilderness areas in the City. All residential properties in the City are low density, single-family residences. There are no multiple-family units in the City. The City contains several neighborhoods defined in the San Marino General Plan. The project site is between two such neighborhoods. The Winston Avenue Neighborhood, immediately west of San Marino High School, has predominantly two-story homes of approximately 12,000 square feet, often in Mediterranean and Spanish styles. This neighborhood is defined by the age of the homes and by their “romance revival” architecture. The San Marino High School neighborhood is immediately east of the project site. It is distinguished from other neighborhoods, including the Winston Avenue Neighborhood, primarily by its later period of development. There is a predominance of single-story ranch homes, fewer sidewalks and parkways, and lower profile street trees.

The project site is owned by the San Marino Unified School District. The District encompasses approximately 5 square miles and serves the City of San Marino and nearby unincorporated portions of Los Angeles County. The District operates four schools: Carver and Valentine elementary schools, Huntington Middle School, and San Marino High School. District enrollment during the 2008–2009 school year was 3,211 K–12 students.

San Marino High School is in a residential area and surrounded by single-family homes on all sides. According to the City of San Marino General Plan Land Use map, the land use designation for the high school is “Community Use,” and the City’s Zoning Map designates the school as R-1 District V, which is a residential designation. The Rubio Wash Flood Channel, an open drainage structure, separates the school from the residences to the west. A small landscaped area is at the northwest corner of Huntington Drive and Gainsborough Drive, and commercial uses line Huntington Drive immediately west of the project site and approximately one-quarter mile east of the project site.



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4.3 LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

As illustrated in Figure 4-1, *Aerial Photograph*, the project site is in the center of the San Marino High School campus, in the midst of the school's recreational facilities. The site is immediately surrounded by the high school's athletic facilities, with an L-shaped swimming pool to the south and west, a baseball diamond to the east, and additional recreational facilities to the north. Photos of the Michael White Adobe (Adobe) and its proximity to the surrounding athletic uses are in Figure 4-2, *Michael White Adobe*.

San Marino High School

San Marino High School serves grades 9–12 and had an enrollment of 1,096 students during the 2008–2009 school year. The school operates on a traditional calendar during the months of August through June. School hours are generally from 8 AM to 3 PM. Summer school has been provided at the campus each year from June until the last week of July. The campus is used before and after school hours for academic, sports, and other programs sponsored by the school, district, city, and community. The campus is also available for public use during nonschool hours in accordance with the Civic Center Act and District policies. During school hours, however, public access on the campus is prohibited unless approval is granted by the high school principal's office. Ambient noise in the area include onsite operation of the high school, including students using the recreational facilities on the campus and vehicles in the parking lot, as well as traffic along Huntington Drive.

Michael White Adobe

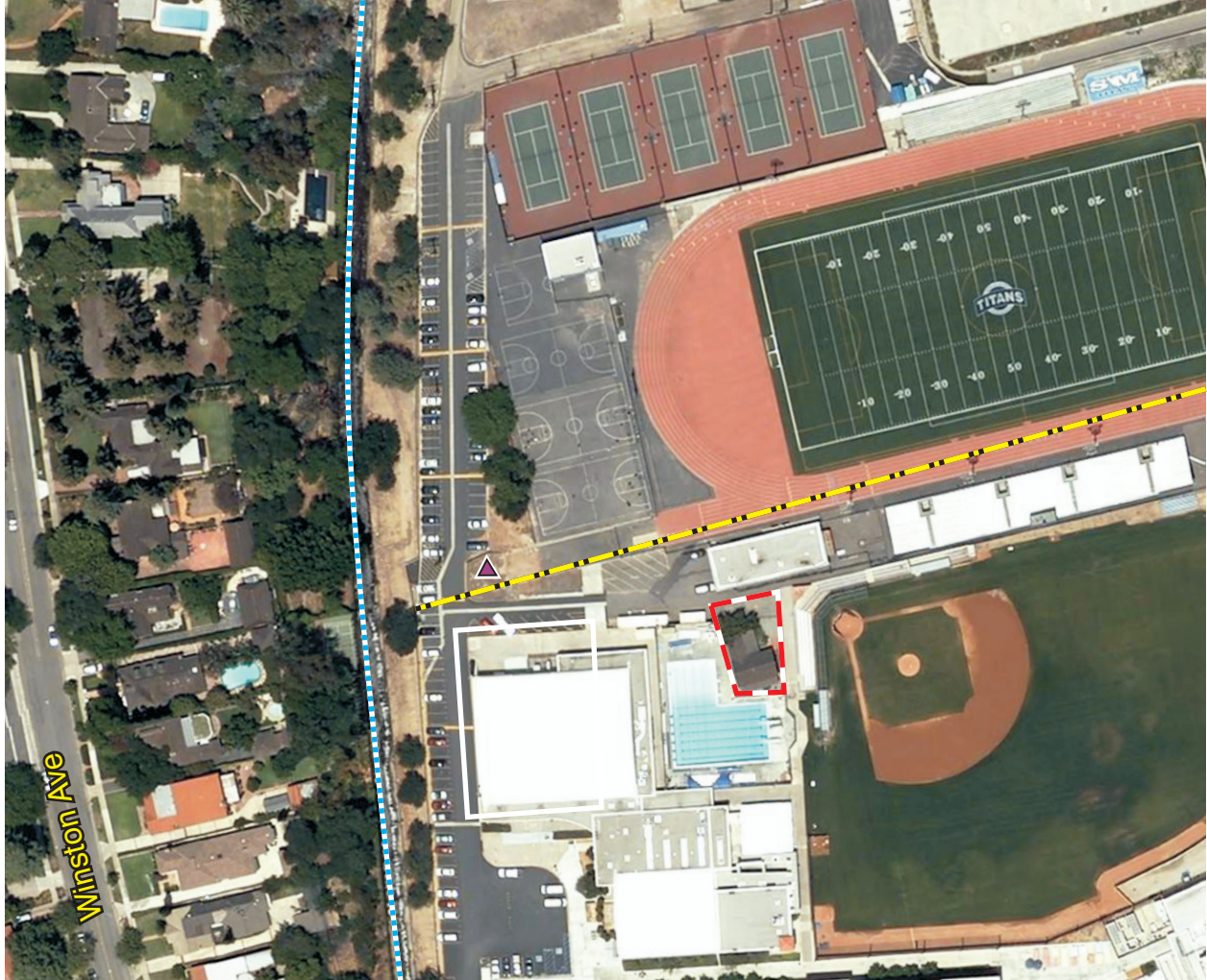
A wrought-iron fence surrounds the vacant project site to prevent unauthorized entry. The project site consists of the Adobe, which is a recognized historic structure and built as early as 1845. The approximately 1,200-square-foot property is an L-shaped adobe house sided with smooth stucco. A one story wing is arranged in a north–south orientation (north wing), and a one-and-a-half story wing is arranged in an east–west orientation (south wing). The one-and-a-half story Adobe has a wood shake roof, wood frames around the doors and windows, and one chimney centered in the south wing. The Adobe is surrounded on all sides by a steel fence. Yucca and other succulents line the east porch, while a cyprus tree shades the north elevation. The porches are paved with brick.

The interior of the Adobe is separated into three rooms. The connection between the north wing and the two rooms in the south wing is particularly wide. Typical of adobe construction, window and door openings reveal thick exterior wall dimensions. Floors are brick while walls are generally finished with smooth plaster. A wood panel is removed from the doorway connection between the north and south wings to reveal the adobe construction. Chair rails are present in the south wing.

As the District is not in the business of maintaining nonschool function buildings and does not have the budget to do so, minimal maintenance has been afforded to the Adobe over the last 50 years. It should be noted that while the roof appears to provide watertight assembly, there is evidence of rising damp or moisture penetration along the interior of the east elevation wall of the south wing. There is also evidence of a termite infestation throughout the interior of the building that could lead to severe damage. A field inspection report was completed for the Adobe to identify violations of regulatory requirements. The report provides more information on the existing conditions and hazards of the Adobe and has been included as Appendix C of this EIR.

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Aerial Photograph



- Site Boundary
- Raymond Earthquake Fault
- Rubio Wash Flood Channel
- ▲ Cell Tower

0 150
Scale (Feet)



Source: Google Maps 2008

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Michael White Adobe



View looking north across swimming pool, toward Michael White Adobe.



View looking west across varsity baseball field. The Michael White Adobe is visible in the center of the photograph.

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Additionally, because the Adobe was built in the mid 1800s, it does not meet requirements of the Field Act (Education Code Section 17280 et seq.)¹, which requires school buildings to meet a higher standard of building safety than that required for commercial, residential, and industrial construction, with particular regard for earthquake safety. For these reasons, the Adobe is legally unsafe for student and staff occupancy and has been fenced off. Although some alterations to the building have been made, the Adobe has not been retrofitted, remodeled, or upgraded to comply with the California Building Standards Code or with the Field Act.

The conditions of the Adobe are further exacerbated because the campus is closed to the public during school operating hours. Access to the Adobe is prohibited during these times unless arrangements are made with the District or San Marino High School administration. Public access to the Adobe during nonschool hours can be made with the San Marino Historical Society. However, because of the limited access and because no formal agreement currently exists with other organizations to maintain it for increased public use, the Adobe continues to be poorly maintained and not adequately preserved.

Michael White Adobe and Design Immunity

Government Code section 830.6 provides that public entities and their employees are generally immune from liability for injuries caused by defective plans or designs as long as the plans were approved in advance by the appropriate authorities (i.e., the Division of the State Architect [DSA]). In this situation, the District is not afforded such protection since it is already aware that the Adobe was not designed based on plans and specifications approved by the appropriate authorities.

Government Code section 830.6 specifically addresses the limits of the design immunity in instances where structures are subsequently found to be unsafe:

Notwithstanding notice that constructed or improved public property may no longer be in conformity with a plan or design or a standard which reasonably could be approved by the legislative body or employee, the immunity provided by this section shall continue for a reasonable period of time sufficient to permit the public entity to obtain funds for and carry out remedial work necessary to allow such public property to be in conformity with a plan or design approved by the legislative body of the public entity or other body or employee, or with a plan or design in conformity with a standard previously approved by such legislative body or other body or employee. In the event that the public entity is unable to remedy such public property because of practical impossibility or lack of sufficient funds, the immunity provided by this section shall remain so long as such public entity shall reasonably attempt to provide adequate warnings of the existence of the condition not conforming to the approved plan or design or to the approved standard. However, where a person fails to heed such warning or occupies public property despite such warning, such failure or occupation shall not in itself constitute an assumption of the risk of the danger indicated by the warning.

In addition, Government Code section 840.2 provides that an employee of a public entity may be personally liable for injuries caused by a dangerous condition of public property if:

The employee had the authority and it was his responsibility to take adequate measures to protect against the dangerous condition at the expense of the public entity and the funds and the other means for doing so were immediately available to him, and he had actual or

¹ The Field Act is applicable to school buildings and hospitals and calls for a higher level of structural strengthening and higher level of review than the Uniform Building Code.



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constructive notice of the dangerous condition... a sufficient time prior to the injury to have taken measures to protect against the dangerous condition.

Because the District is aware that the Adobe does not meet the safety requirements of the DSA, has never been approved by an appropriate authority, and is not in compliance with the California Building Standards Code or Field Act, the District and governing Board Members may be held liable for injuries or damages caused by structural failure or collapse of the Adobe, pursuant to Government Code Section 830.6 or Government Code Section 835.

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 CEQA 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:

- 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 in this Draft EIR are based on method A. Cumulative impacts are analyzed by considering concurrent development projects in the project area.

The majority of the City of San Marino has been developed, largely with residences. Very few development projects occur in the City. As of January 2009, only five development projects were underway in the City of San Marino. The project site is also within two miles of the cities of Pasadena, San Gabriel, Temple City, Alhambra, and unincorporated portions of the County of Los Angeles. Requests were submitted to these governments for information regarding new development within their respective boundaries. Table 4-1 contains a list of new developments within two miles of the proposed project, as provided by the above-listed agencies. This list of projects serves as the basis for the cumulative analyses provided in the individual sections of Chapter 5, *Environmental Analysis*.

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**Table 4-1
Development Projects within One Mile**

	<i>Address</i>	<i>Development Type</i>	<i>Distance from Project Site</i>
1	1236 Patton Way, San Marino	New single-family residence	1 mile
2	2853 Gainsborough Drive, San Marino	New single-family residence	0.3 miles
3	2390 Huntington Drive, San Marino	New commercial building	0.3 miles
4	8356 Sheffield Road, Los Angeles County	New multifamily (5 detached condominiums)	0.9 miles
5	8300 Longden Avenue, Los Angeles County	New multifamily (9 condominiums)	1 mile
6	300 South Santa Anita, Los Angeles County	Convert single-family residences to multifamily condominiums	0.9 miles
7	2434 Oneida Street	New multifamily	0.9 miles
8	405 South Sierra Madre Boulevard, Los Angeles County	New 24-unit condominium	0.8 miles
9	200 South Sierra Madre Boulevard, Pasadena	New construction of 71 townhomes on three parcels	1 mile
10	2900 East Del Mar Boulevard, Pasadena	Amendment to Master Development Plan to add 231,000-square-foot medical development	1 mile
11	2889 San Pasqual Street, Pasadena	Demolition of 29 dwelling units, construction of 59 new dwelling units & 6,200 square feet of administrative offices	0.9 miles

Source: Correspondence with Amanda Thorson (Planning Assistant, City of San Marino) and Adam Gulick (Associate Planner, City of Temple City); Planning Case Logs of the City of San Gabriel (<http://www.sangabrielcity.com/cityservices/communitydev/plancaselog.html>); Correspondence with Tony Alcaraz (Department of Regional Planning, Los Angeles County); Los Angeles County DRP Cumulative Project Report; correspondence with Tony Gardea (Associate Planner, Community Planning, City of Pasadena); and Pasadena Planning and Development Projects map (<http://www.cityofpasadena.net/planning/mapping/projectmap.asp>).



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