

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 - PURPOSE

The purpose of this Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND) is to identify potential environmental impacts associated with the renovation of the band shell located in MacArthur Park in the City of Los Angeles. The park is located at the junction of Wilshire Boulevard and Alvarado Street, approximately 1.5 miles west of downtown Los Angeles (see Exhibit 1, *Regional Location*). This IS/ND has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State and Los Angeles City CEQA Guidelines.

Pursuant to Section 15367 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the City of Los Angeles is the Lead Agency in the preparation of this proposed IS/ND. The City has primary responsibility for approval or denial of this project. The intended use of this IS/ND is to provide adequate environmental analysis related to project construction and operational activities of the proposed project.

The remainder of this section provides a description of the proposed project location and the characteristics of the proposed project. Section 2 includes an environmental checklist that provides an overview of the potential environmental impacts that would or would not result from project implementation. Section 3 elaborates on the information contained in the environmental checklist and provides a detailed explanation of each determination.

1.2 - PROJECT LOCATION

The band shell site is located in the northwest corner of MacArthur Park, which is bounded by West 6th Street on the north, South Alvarado Street on the east, West 7th Street on the south, and South Park View Street on the west. Wilshire Boulevard passes through the center of the park in an east-west direction, and Metro's Red Line runs beneath the park roughly paralleling Wilshire Boulevard. The Westlake/MacArthur Park Metro train station lies immediately to the east of the park and across Alvarado Street. The park site is within a highly urbanized area of central Los Angeles (see Exhibit 2, Local Vicinity Aerial Map, and Exhibit 3, Local Vicinity USGS Map). The project site is located on the U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) 7.5' Hollywood Quadrangle Map, and the site comprises Los Angeles County Assessor Parcel Number 5141-003-900. Exhibit 4, Project Aerial Photograph, shows the location of the band shell within the park.

1.3 - PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project consists of renovations to the existing MacArthur Park Band Shell and enhancements to audience and walkway areas in front of the stage. Renovations to the band shell

structure, consist of the actions outlined below. For an overview of the existing and proposed band shell floor plans, see Exhibit 5, *Existing Band Shell Floor Plan*, and Exhibit 6, *Proposed Band Shell Floor Plan*.

- Renovations of the band shell building, including new ADA accessible bathrooms, as well as general interior, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing upgrades;
- Rehabilitation and/or replacement of structural components and sub-floor components; and
- Installation of a concrete ADA accessible ramp allowing disabled access to the interior of the band shell and the stage area.

Enhancements to the audience and walkway areas in front of the band shell consist of the actions outlined below. For an overview of project landscaping, see Exhibit 7, *Conceptual Landscaping Plan*.

- Removal of the existing stage extension and audience benches and replacement of these areas with grass lawn for open seating;
- Removal of existing concrete walkways in front of the band shell and replacement with a paved walkway in a new configuration that better serves the needs of the band shell audience and of other passersby, and that helps to define the territory of the band shell area;
- Installation of a low stone curb along a portion of the walkway;
- Installation and/or modification of irrigation components as necessary to water new lawn areas;

The band shell has been essentially unused since 2001, due largely to internal and external deterioration of the facility. The purpose of the renovations and enhancements is to allow outdoor performances and activities to resume at the band shell. Musical performances would generally occur during the evening hours of the summer months. The band shell could also be used during larger festivals at the park, for theater practice and/or performances during City summer camp programs, and for “Movies in the Park” performances several evenings per year. Performance activities at the band shell would largely be restricted to the warmer summer months.

The band shell is part of the larger MacArthur Park. Besides the band shell, the park contains a manmade lake, sports fields, playgrounds, walking paths, a community arts center, and extensive landscaped areas. The park is heavily used, not only for typical park activities, but also as a lunch spot and gathering place for people living and working in the area.

1.4 - GENERAL HISTORY

The project will be located in MacArthur Park, a large urban public park constructed and enhanced over a period of time beginning in the late 1880s. The park was originally named Westlake Park, and consisted of a lake, a boathouse, and a surrounding carriageway. A band shell was added in 1896, and the park entertained a steady stream of visitors via two streetcar lines that terminated at the park. The park area itself was surrounded by fashionable residential areas. Wilshire Boulevard was extended through the park in the 1930s. The park was renamed in 1942, in honor of General Douglas MacArthur, commander of U.S. armed forces in the Pacific during World War II.

The original band shell built in 1896 was eventually removed, and the present structure was built in 1957. The building is a stucco finished frame structure with a vaulted roof performance area. The front of the band shell features a laminated wooden parabolic arch, which is the structure's principal design feature. Benches are arranged in front of the stage area, and concrete walkways access the audience area. The lawn areas extending outward from the front of the band shell slope gently upward, creating an amphitheater effect to the area. See Exhibit 8, *Site Photographs*, for an overview of the band shell and surrounding areas.

1.5 - ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

MacArthur Park is approximately 32 acres in size and is surrounded on all sides by arterial roadways. The park is bounded by West 6th Street on the north, South Alvarado Street on the east, West 7th Street on the south, and South Park View Street on the west. Wilshire Boulevard passes through the center of the park in an east-west direction, and Metro's Red Line runs beneath the park roughly paralleling Wilshire Boulevard. The park is an island of open space in a highly urbanized setting. The skyscrapers of downtown Los Angeles can be seen about 1.5 miles to the east, and the streets surrounding the park are lined with a variety of urban uses. See Exhibit 2, *Local Vicinity Aerial Map*, and Exhibit 3, *Local Vicinity USGS Map*. See also Exhibit 4, *Project Aerial Photograph*, which shows the location of the band shell within the park.

Besides the band shell, the park contains a manmade lake, sports fields, a playground, walking paths, picnic tables, a community arts center, and extensive landscaped areas. The park is heavily used, not only for typical park activities, but also as a lunch spot and gathering place for people living and working in the area. On a typical workday, hundreds of people use the park for active recreation, a place to rest or eat lunch, and a variety of other uses. Thousands more utilize the sidewalks that surround or pass through the park. Wilshire Boulevard is a busy arterial roadway that passes through the center of the park in an east-west direction. Two pedestrian walkways pass under the roadway and connect the two halves of the park. A public restroom facility is located at the east end of the park adjacent to Alvarado Street.

The park contains no dedicated automobile parking areas. Most park users enter the area on foot or via public transportation. Bus routes 18, 20, 21, 26, 51, 52, 352, and 603 serve Wilshire Boulevard or the other streets surrounding the park. In addition, the Westlake/MacArthur Park Metro train station lies immediately to the east of the park across Alvarado Street. Visitors to the park arriving by automobile can use metered parking spaces along Wilshire Boulevard, South Park View Street, or West 6th Street. There are approximately 182 metered parking spaces immediately adjacent to the park or along Wilshire Boulevard within the park. Additional street parking is available on other surrounding area streets.

1.6 - SURROUNDING LAND USES

MacArthur Park is bounded by West 6th Street on the north, South Alvarado Street on the east, West 7th Street on the south, and South Park View Street on the west. Wilshire Boulevard passes through the park in an east-west direction See Exhibit 2, *Local Vicinity Aerial Map*, and Exhibit 3, *Local Vicinity USGS Map*. See also Exhibit 4, *Project Aerial Photograph*, which shows the location of the band shell within the park.

Generally speaking, the surrounding area is a vibrant center for commercial and residential activity. The streets, immediately surrounding the park have a wide variety of uses including general

commercial facilities, restaurants, government services buildings, an elementary school, high density multi-family residential apartment buildings, and the historic multi-story Park Plaza hotel. The Mexican Consulate is located on West 6th Street across from the park, as is the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services building. Charles White Elementary School is located on South Park View Street across from the park. The school opened in 2004 and serves approximately 500 students.

The Park Plaza Hotel is also situated on South Park View Street across from the band shell area. The hotel was built in 1925 and is currently undergoing renovation. The building is not expected to be used for lodging until the renovations are completed in late 2007. The lower floors of the hotel are still regularly used, however, as a location for filming movies and music videos, as well as for conferences and other uses.

1.7 - INTENDED USE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This IS/ND will be used by the City of Los Angeles (Lead Agency) in evaluating the potential environmental impacts of the MacArthur Park Band Shell Renovation, hereinafter referred to as “the project.” This document will be adopted as part of the final project approval by the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners prior to construction of the improvements.