

County of Santa Clara

Facilities and Fleet Department

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NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR 231 GRANT EDUCATOR WORKFORCE HOUSING

Project Owner/Proponent: County of Santa Clara - Facilities and Fleets Department (FAF)
Project Title: 231 Grant Educator Workforce Housing
Assessor's Parcel Number: 132-31-074

As the Lead Agency, the County of Santa Clara (County) will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed project referenced above. The County welcomes your input regarding the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR. A brief description of the proposed project, its location, and a summary of the potential environmental effects is provided on the following pages.

The project proposes demolition of the existing single-story building on the site and construction of a four-story building that would contain approximately 110 residential units and related amenities and approximately 1,200 square feet of "flex space" which could be utilized as a café or other retail/commercial use. Approval of the project will require actions by the County of Santa Clara, including approval by the County Board of Supervisors.

A Public Scoping/Community Meeting to solicit comments on the Notice of Preparation will be held on:

Wednesday, December 16, 2020 from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

The meeting will be held virtually. The meeting link and instructions for joining the virtual meeting are available on the project website at <https://www.sccgov.org/231grant>.

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), comments on this Notice of Preparation are due within 30 days of its receipt. However, an earlier response, if possible, would be appreciated. Please send your response to:

County of Santa Clara Facilities and Fleets Department
Attention: Emily Chen
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Prepared by:

Emily Chen, Senior Planner

Emily Chen

12/2/2020

Signature

Date

Approved by:

David Barry, Chief of Facilities Planning Services

David Barry

12/2/2020

Signature

Date

231 GRANT EDUCATOR WORKFORCE HOUSING

Project Location

The project site is at 231 Grant Avenue in the City of Palo Alto (Figure 1). The project site is approximately 1.4 acres bounded by Park Boulevard, Grant Avenue, and Birch Street. The project site contains an approximately 6,800-square-foot office building completed in 1956 and an associated parking area. The site is owned by the County and the existing office building currently houses the Santa Clara County Office of the Public Defender (Figure 2).

An outdoor café and multifamily residential housing are adjacent to northeast boundary of the Project site at the corner of Sheridan Avenue and Park Boulevard and a multistory office building is adjacent to southeast boundary of the project site at the corner of Sheridan Avenue and Birch Street. The Santa Clara County Superior Court building is west of the project site, across Grant Avenue. Areas to the east and west of Grant Avenue and south of Birch Street in the vicinity of the project site are predominantly multifamily residential housing. Office buildings and multifamily residential housing are north of the project site along Park Boulevard.

The project site is on County-owned property but within the incorporated area of the City of Palo Alto.

Project Description

The 231 Grant Educator Workforce Housing (the proposed project) is currently sponsored by the County of Santa Clara, Facebook, the City of Palo Alto, and participating school districts in Santa Clara County.

The proposed project would demolish the existing 6,800-square-foot office building at the project site and would construct a new four-story building, totaling approximately 112,000 square feet, on the site. The building would be developed with 110 residential units. These units would be intended to serve teachers and other full-time staff from participating school districts in Santa Clara County and from certain geographic districts in southern San Mateo County.¹ Approximately 2,000 square feet of community space, including a lounge, activity room and laundry, would be provided for residents' use, as well as management offices and approximately 1,200 square feet of "flex space" which could be utilized as a café or other retail or commercial use.

An at-grade parking structure with double car stackers would provide 112 parking spaces and a secure bicycle parking room would be provided with capacity for 134 bicycles. Approximately 5,600 square feet of open public space would be provided within three outdoor plaza areas, each centered around an existing mature tree (palm, camphor, and redwood, respectively) that would be retained as part of the project.

The project is anticipated to utilize modular construction methods; however, the use of traditional construction methods will also be analyzed as an alternative to the proposed project.

Potential Environmental Effects of the Project

The EIR will identify the significant environmental effects anticipated to result from implementation of the proposed project. As allowed by CEQA Guidelines §15063(a), an Initial Study has not been prepared for the proposed project because an EIR will clearly be required. Due to the location of the project site in an urban area that is not within or close to any farmlands or forestry resources, known mineral deposits, or wildfire hazard areas, these environmental topics will not be addressed in detail in the EIR.

¹ In the event units are not filled by school employees, then units may be offered to public safety employees or nonprofit employees.

The EIR will evaluate all other environmental issues contemplated for consideration under CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, including:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise and Vibration
- Recreational Resources
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Tribal Cultural Resources

It is anticipated that the primary focus of analysis will be on the specific environmental topics outlined below. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce or avoid significant impacts, as appropriate.

Aesthetics

The project site currently contains a single-story office building and associated surface parking and landscaping. The proposed project calls for the County to demolish this building, and to develop a four story building on the site. The EIR will describe the existing visual setting of the project area and changes that are anticipated to occur as a result of the proposed project. The EIR will also discuss potential light and glare issues from the development and evaluate the project's consistency with applicable zoning and design guidelines and other regulations governing scenic quality and aesthetics.

Air Quality

The EIR will address the regional air quality conditions in the Bay Area and discuss the proposed project's impacts to local and regional air quality according to the 2017 Bay Area Air Quality Management District guidelines and thresholds, focusing on temporary construction-related impacts such as construction vehicle exhaust and dust, as well as operational impacts from traffic generated by project residents, employees and visitors, and other operational emissions sources.

Biological Resources

The EIR will describe existing biological resources in the project vicinity and address any biological resource effects associated with the project, including impacts to habitats and special-status species, including nesting birds. The EIR will also address the loss of trees within the project site and the project's consistency with tree preservation ordinances of both the City of Palo Alto and the County.

Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources

The existing office building on the project site was constructed in 1956. An historical resource evaluation has been completed for the site (AECOM 2020), which found that the existing building is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Places, County Heritage Resource Inventory, or the City of Palo Alto Historic Inventory. Direct impacts to built historic resources are therefore not anticipated for the project, although the EIR will identify any built historic resources in the vicinity of the project site that could potentially be indirectly impacted by the project. The EIR will also discuss the potential for prehistoric and Native American tribal cultural resources to be located in the project area.

Energy

The EIR will examine the potential for the project to result in excessive or inefficient use of energy and will discuss any energy conservation measures included as part of the project.

Geology & Soils

The project site is located within a seismically active region. The EIR will describe existing geological and soil conditions at the site, and discuss possible impacts associated with seismic hazards and soil instability, as well as potential impacts to paleontological resources.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The EIR will describe the regulatory context surrounding the issue of global climate change and will evaluate the project's greenhouse gas emissions and contribution to global climate change, in conformance with the methodology of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and any other applicable criteria.

Hazards & Hazardous Materials

According to Regional Water Quality Control Board GeoTracker records, a regional plume of chlorinated solvents, known as the California-Olive-Emerson plume, exists in groundwater in the project vicinity. The EIR will describe existing hazardous materials conditions on and adjacent to the project site and identify any potential contamination or other hazardous materials that could affect construction workers and/or nearby receptors, such as residences, schools, daycare facilities, and open space/recreational areas. The EIR will also describe any hazardous materials or emissions associated with project construction or operation, and their potential impacts.

Hydrology & Water Quality

The EIR will describe the existing hydrologic and drainage conditions at the project site, as well as changes in site drainage and hydrological conditions that may result from the proposed project. The EIR will address the possible impacts of the project on stormwater, surface water, and groundwater quality.

Land Use and Planning

The project site is located in an urban area within the City of Palo Alto. The EIR will describe the existing land uses and zoning designations on and adjacent to the project site. Cumulative land use impacts that would occur as a result of the proposed project would be analyzed, including impacts due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

Noise and Vibration

The EIR will describe existing noise conditions in the project area and evaluate the potential for noise and vibration generated by the project to exceed applicable noise standards and adversely affect sensitive receptors in the area. Noise and vibration impacts from both construction-related sources and operational sources (including project-generated traffic) will be analyzed.

Population and Housing

The project would construct up to 110 residential units. The EIR will assess whether the project would induce cumulative unplanned population growth in the area or displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing.

Public Services and Recreational Resources

The EIR will discuss the availability of public facilities and service systems (including police and fire services, parks, schools, and libraries) and recreational resources in the project area, and the potential for the project to require the construction of new or expanded facilities or result in adverse physical impacts to existing facilities.

Transportation

The EIR will describe the existing transportation network and analyze the impacts of the project, including whether the project would conflict with applicable transportation planning policies, result in a substantial

increase in vehicle miles travelled, create a traffic safety hazard, or impact emergency access. Temporary construction-related traffic impacts will also be analyzed.

Utilities and Service Systems

The EIR will describe the existing utilities serving the project area, including potable water supply, sanitary sewer, storm drainage, and solid waste management services. The EIR will evaluate the proposed project's effects on these utilities.

Alternatives

The EIR will identify and evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives to the project that would feasibly attain most of the project's basic objectives, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the project's significant effects. It is anticipated that one of the alternatives to be analyzed would include the use of traditional construction methods rather than modular construction as proposed by the project. As required by CEQA, the EIR will analyze a "No Project" alternative. Other alternatives that seek to reduce the significant environmental impacts of the project will be identified. Alternatives discussed will be chosen based on their ability to reduce or avoid identified significant impacts of the project while achieving most of the identified objectives of the project (see CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6).

The EIR will identify the degree to which each alternative might avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the project's significant environmental impacts, whether the alternative could result in other or increased impacts, and the degree to which the alternative would feasibly accomplish most of the project's basic objectives. In accordance with CEQA, the EIR will identify an environmentally superior alternative, based on the number and degree of associated environmental impacts.

Cumulative Impacts

The EIR will include a discussion of significant cumulative impacts of the project when considered with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the area. This section will cover all relevant subject areas discussed in the EIR (e.g., air quality, noise, traffic), will specify which of the areas are anticipated to experience significant cumulative impacts, and will determine whether the proposed project's incremental contributions are cumulatively considerable. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce or avoid any cumulatively considerable contribution from the project to significant cumulative impacts.

Other CEQA Sections

The EIR will also include other sections required by CEQA, including growth inducing impacts, significant and irreversible environmental changes, significant unavoidable impacts, references, EIR preparers, and appendices.



