

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL

DATE: DECEMBER 11, 2006

FROM: CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (CALTECH) MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN AMENDMENT AND FINAL SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (SEIR)

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council, following a public hearing:

1. Adopt a Resolution to certify the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) and adopt the Mitigation Measures and Mitigation Monitoring Reporting Program prepared for the proposed amendments to the Caltech Master Development Plan (Attachment 4);
2. Adopt by Resolution the Specific Findings that the Master Development Plan Amendments are consistent with the General Plan goals and objectives and with the provisions of the Zoning Code;
3. Approve the proposed amendments to the Caltech Master Development Plan with the recommended Conditions of Approval (Attachment 1);
4. Approve the De Minimis Impact Finding on the State Fish and Wildlife Habitat (Attachment 5); and
5. Direct the City Clerk to file a Notice of Determination and Certificate of Fee Exemption for the California Department of Fish and Game with the Los Angeles County Recorder (Attachment 6).

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission considered the Final SEIR and the proposed amendments to the Caltech Master Development Plan at their November 8 and December 6, 2006 meetings. The Commission recommended approval of the amendments to the Master Plan with revisions to conditions of approval all of which are included in the staff's recommendation with the exception of Condition 10.a. That condition states, "*That the applicant shall develop modifications to its paid parking policy that will mitigate Caltech*

related all day parking on surrounding neighborhood streets. These modifications shall be submitted to and reviewed by the Director of the Department of Transportation for approval.” Staff’s recommendation does not include this change.

At the October 9th City Council meeting, CUP #4253 was called up and the Council directed Caltech to continue discussions with the neighbors to resolve the parking problems and to formulate a plan. The City Council’s anticipated reconsideration of the CUP early next year and review of Caltech’s measures to manage its parking should identify tools other than that recommended by the Planning Commission and which could be adopted by the Council as part of the call-up process.

DESIGN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

On August 28, 2006, the Design Commission provided comments on the Draft SEIR for the Master Plan Amendments and Design Guidelines and Design Review Thresholds. The Commission had concerns about the new additions to the North Undergraduate Houses encroaching south into the open space area. The Commission, reaffirmed its prior comments in support of the revisions to the Design Guidelines; recommended lowering the Design Commission Review thresholds in the Master Plan from 70,000 square feet to 25,000 square feet for buildings along public streets and 50,000 square feet for buildings on the interior of the campus; and that the Master Plan should identify thematic elements in new buildings that would tie the architectural elements of the campus together in certain elements while still allowing for innovation. Staff recommendation incorporates changes made to the design review guidelines and design review thresholds which respond to the Commission’s recommendation.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

On September 5, 2006, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the Draft SEIR and the Design Review thresholds for historic properties on the Caltech campus and recommended approval of the list of buildings for which major alteration or major additions will be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission (Attachment 3). Additional comments were: 1) the future design, massing, and location of the expanded North Undergraduate Houses shall respect the Athenaeum and its setting. The new construction should avoid as much as possible the mature trees in the open space on the west side of the Athenaeum; 2) at its eastern edge, the expanded (or newly constructed) North Undergraduate Houses shall match (or closely approximate but not exceed) the footprint and massing of the east wing of the South Undergraduate Houses to respect the open space and setting of the Athenaeum; 3) the Historic Preservation Commission shall review the massing and footprint of the expanded (or newly constructed) North Undergraduate Houses and the Design Commission shall review the design. The conditions of approval recommended for the Master Plan address the Commission’s recommendation.

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

On September 7, 2006, the Transportation Advisory Commission (TAC) provided comments on the Draft SEIR, and supported the amendments to the Caltech Master Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May 1989, the City Council approved the Caltech Master Development Plan to guide future campus development over the 30-year life of the Plan. Development of new facilities at Caltech is programmatically driven; therefore, the Master Plan provides some flexibility in sizing, exact placement, and development time of campus facilities. The Master Plan does not locate or illustrate individual buildings. Instead, it identifies “envelopes” for the construction of new academic, residential, and parking facilities. Development standards define the size of the envelopes and control the height and location, while the design guidelines guide the character of development to be built within the envelopes.

The amendments would allow demolition and replacement of several buildings: 1) Mead Laboratory; 2) North Undergraduate Houses, and 3) Braun and Marks Graduate Houses. The current Master Plan did not envision these buildings to be demolished; thus, the amendments. An amendment is also required for a reduced setback for a new building (the Campus Center) along Holliston Avenue. Additionally, the amendments include revisions to the design guidelines to broaden the range of architectural styles and landscape designs for future development outside the “historic core” of the campus, and changes to the design review thresholds.

The potential environmental impacts generated by the proposed amendment to the Master Development Plan have been assessed in a Final SEIR. The Final SEIR analyzed six areas of potential impacts: aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, historic resources, traffic and circulation, and utilities and service systems. With the incorporation of mitigation measures, the potential environmental impacts were determined to be less than significant (Attachment 4).

Since the adoption of the Master Plan, two amendments to the Plan have been approved by the City Council (in 1995 and 1999). The current amendments would provide improved facilities for Caltech’s students and academic programs envisioned by the Master Plan. The amount of development (beds and square footage) proposed under the amendments remain within the intensity provided in the Master Plan. These amendments would not directly generate growth in the student population. However, a slight increase (from 1,275 to 1,400 students) to the graduate student population is expected by 2015. Undergraduate student population will remain essentially at the current levels (approximately 900 students).

BACKGROUND

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The proposed amendments include the following (see map in Attachment 2):

Construction of the Chemistry and Chemical Engineering Laboratory (CCE Lab)

In this amendment, Caltech proposes two alternatives:

1. Demolition of the Mead Laboratory and construction of a new laboratory on the existing site, within the building envelope identified in the Master Plan to the west. Designed by John J. Kewell in the late international style and built in 1973, the single-story, 8,000-square foot Mead Lab is used for chemistry laboratory instructional work. The building appears to be unaltered on the exterior, except for the addition of the storage area, and is in good condition; however, the building does not appear to be eligible for federal, state or local listing. The new three-story building would be approximately 80,000 square feet with two basement levels. The building would front on Wilson Avenue and would have a setback of 85 feet, as provided in the Master Plan. Development would be required to follow all applicable guidelines as provided in the Master Plan.

2. Construction of the CCE Lab between the Beckman Behavior Biology (BBB) and Noyes Laboratories. In this area a public art element (Moore's Stone Volute, by artist Lloyd Hamrol) and a heavily planted informal park-like open space that contributes to the San Pasqual Mall pedestrian corridor would be removed. The new building would also be three stories high with two basement levels, and a building area of 80,000 square feet.

Removal of the art element was considered a potentially significant impact to scenic resources; however, requiring the applicant to relocate or replace the art element, will reduce the impact to less than significant. Currently, Caltech is working cooperatively with the artist on this effort. In addition, the Master Plan requires an art element for any academic, administrative, or athletic building over 70,000 square feet of gross floor area.

Views in this area of open space are limited to surrounding buildings, a driveway, and a parking lot. The construction of the CCE at this location would allow for the new building to flank side-by-side with the science buildings to the east and west. This would be similar to the buildings (Baxter Hall and Keck Laboratory) on the eastern side of the open spaced area.

To ensure that the construction of the laboratory in this area would not reduce the overall view along the east-west open space and the pedestrian corridor of the San Pasqual Mall, a condition of approval requires that the southern terminus of the new building envelope not encroach into the main pedestrian walkway on the east-west axis of the San Pasqual Mall.

Approximately 49 trees are proposed for removal, of which 27 are native and 2 specimen trees protected per the City's Trees and Tree Protection Ordinance. The potential impact from removal of trees will be reduced to a less than significant level by requiring replacement of the tree canopy removed (Attachment 4).

The amended Master Plan will allow Caltech to choose either of these two alternatives.

Rehabilitation or Construction of the North Undergraduate Houses (Page, Lloyd, and Ruddock)

Two scenarios are proposed for this amendment either: 1) demolition of the existing North Undergraduate Houses and replacement with four new undergraduate dormitories; or 2) rehabilitation with small additions to the houses on the south side, and an addition of a fourth house on the east side. The amended Master Plan will allow Caltech to choose either of these two scenarios.

The rehabilitation or reconstruction of the North Undergraduate Houses may have potential adverse impacts to the Athenaeum and South Undergraduate Houses. The rehabilitation also has the potential to encroach upon the surrounding open space, landscaping, and view of the Athenaeum and South Undergraduate Houses. Mitigation measures imposed on the project includes review from the Design Commission in order to assure its conformance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards with respect to its potential impacts on the Athenaeum, South Undergraduates, and the landscape features.

1. In the first scenario, Caltech proposes to demolish the undergraduate houses and replace them with four new dormitories that would better serve the needs of the students. The dormitories would expand to the east by approximately 35 feet. The new dormitories would be three stories high with a building area of 138,000 square feet, and a total of 275 beds. Thirty trees are proposed for removal; of which 16 (10 native and 6 specimen) are protected by the City's Tree Removal and Tree Protection Ordinance. The potential impact from the tree removals will be mitigated by Caltech's landscape plans that will restore the tree canopy, the theme and visual integrity of existing landscaped areas. The potential height, three-stories, may lead to significant impact in massing; however, mitigation measures were imposed that new construction associated with the residential houses shall be designed in a matter that clearly articulates the massing of the new building.

2. In the second scheme, Caltech proposes to rehabilitate and make small additions to each house on the south side, with an addition of a fourth house on the east side. The fourth house would expand to the east by approximately 95 feet along 200 feet of the eastern boundary. The additions would be two stories in height with a building area of 138,000 square feet. The fourth house would extend across a structured open space area identified in the Master Plan and serving as a pedestrian walkway between San Pasqual Street and California Boulevard. As proposed, the addition of the fourth house would reduce the open space corridor and may have an impact upon the surrounding

open space, landscaping, and view of the Athenaeum and South Undergraduate Houses.

Designed by Smith, Powell and Morgridge and constructed in 1960, the undergraduate houses are a series of one-and two-story rectangular buildings joined together forming courtyards. The historic resources report prepared for these buildings indicate they do not appear to meet criteria for eligibility for federal, state, or local listing due to their age and lack of connectivity to notable persons, events, or periods in time; thus, there is no impact on removing these buildings. However, other buildings and site features, most notably the Athenaeum, South Undergraduate Houses and the landscape design for the Athenaeum, have been identified as significant historic resources, which could be affected by development near them. Mitigation measures were imposed on the project that would reduce the impact to less than significant (Attachment 4). In addition, to ensure that the proposed building envelope does not impact the setting of the Athenaeum and the South Undergraduate Houses, the new or rehabilitated student houses shall be required, at its eastern edge, to match (or closely approximate but not exceed) the footprint and massing of the east wing of the South Undergraduate Houses to respect the open space and setting of the Athenaeum.

Demolition and Replacement of the Braun and Marks Graduate Houses

The existing Braun and Marks Graduate Houses located at the northeast corner of Holliston Avenue and San Pasqual were built in 1961. The Braun building was designed by Smith, Powell and Morgridge in the International Style. The Marks building was designed by James H. Van Dyke & Associates. Both of these buildings are essentially rectangular in plan and feature a flat roof and steel casement windows with narrow concrete pilasters. These buildings appear to be unaltered and in good condition; but they do not appear to be eligible for federal, state or local listing; therefore, there is no impact on removing these buildings from the Caltech campus.

The new dormitory would have a maximum height of three stories, approximately 55,000 square feet, and a total of 62 beds. The new building would have a setback of 44 feet along San Pasqual Street and a 51-foot setback on Holliston Avenue, consistent with setbacks of existing nearby buildings. As proposed, the number of beds, the building height and setbacks are consistent with the Master Plan provisions.

Three trees are proposed for removal; one specimen and two non-protected. The proposed removal of trees is considered significant; however, mitigation measures were imposed on the project that would reduce it to a level of insignificance.

Construction of a New Campus Center

This amendment involves replacing the existing one-story, 37,000 square foot Physical Plant offices and shops building with a new Campus Center on the west side of Holliston Avenue, north of San Pasqual Street. The building was designed in 1958 by an in-house staff and appears to be unaltered and in good condition. As analyzed in the SEIR, the building does not appear to be eligible for federal, state or local listing.

The Campus Center would house multi-purpose student areas, a music hall, music rehearsal and practice facilities, a visitor information center, offices, and a library. The new structure would be approximately 100,000 square feet, three-stories high, with two subterranean levels. The building would be setback approximately 41 feet from Holliston Avenue. The Master Plan established a setback of 60 feet for buildings along the west side of Holliston Avenue and 50 feet along the east side to create a landscape esplanade along Holliston Avenue. Currently, the new buildings on the west side of Holliston Avenue, south of Del Mar Boulevard have a 60 foot setback. Further south, however, close to the proposed Campus Center, existing buildings (i.e. the Human Resources building) have a setback less than 60 feet. With the proposed 41-foot setback, the Campus would align with the Human Resources building. Further, the setback would continue to allow for landscape treatment on the west side of Holliston Avenue and continue to provide for a soft green edge on the sides of the internal streets within the campus, reinforcing the continuity of open space and circulation across these corridors.

Three trees are proposed for removal on this site, one of which is a protected specimen. The impact for the removal of these trees was considered to be significant; however, mitigation imposed on the project would reduce it to less than significant (Attachment 4).

Revisions of the Open Space Strategy and Design Guidelines for the North Campus Facilities on the East-West Axis and Revisions to the Design Review Thresholds Established in the Design Guidelines

In response to the November 1999 City Council's action on the Broad Center for Biological Science, Caltech proposes to revise the design guidelines for new facilities at the edges of the campus, and the south side of California Boulevard. The amendment revises the design guidelines for the east-west open space axis of the north campus and would modify the arcade dedication and pavilion requirements, allowing for increased variation in architectural and design styles in areas outside the "historic core" of the campus. The amendment would also change the building height measurement from stories to height in feet above grade along with other technical clarification and terminology to align with the zoning code (Attachment 3).

These changes would encourage architectural distinction and improve landscaping that would implement the objectives of the Plan. The proposal would allow new buildings to improve the visual character within the area through construction of significant buildings of quality and distinction.

Parking/Traffic

The traffic and parking study prepared for the Draft SEIR analyzed potential traffic and parking impacts of the proposed amendments to the Master Plan. The study concludes that the project would not generate a significant impact on the nine study intersections and five street segments. However, the project will result in an increase in traffic of up to 1.8 percent on adjacent street segments. While this increase requires review by the Transportation staff, no mitigations are required. Conditions of approval from the Department of Transportation would encourage non-auto travel.

Currently, Caltech has a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan with the City. Caltech is currently implementing an aggressive and Award Winning Rideshare Program that meets the City's Trip Reduction Ordinance requirements.

Parking Analysis – The traffic and parking study also evaluated the parking supply to accommodate projected parking demands for the project. The study determined that at peak time (after 10:00 a.m. on weekdays) the existing demand was 2,914 spaces in 2004. With the completion of the new parking structure south of California Boulevard, the campus has a total of 3,394 spaces. This structure was built to accommodate future growth on the campus. Based on the study, there is a surplus of 516 parking spaces for 2005.

Future parking conditions were analyzed for the year 2015 with anticipated campus population of 6,400 that would yield a parking demand of 3,219 spaces. With the development under the amendments there would be a net reduction of 61 spaces bringing the projected supply to 3,333 spaces. This would exceed future 2015 demand of 3,219 spaces by 114 spaces. Thus, with the forecast growth in campus population and the completion of the proposed development amendments, the future on-campus parking supply would accommodate the needs of the campus.

In the Fall 2005, Caltech implemented a parking fee for staff, faculty, and students utilizing all parking structures on the campus for weekdays between the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Outside of those hours on evenings and weekends, parking remains free. Following this change, an increase in on-street parking was observed on nearby residential streets. In response to the complaints from the neighbors on the spillover of parking onto adjacent residential streets from the California Boulevard parking structure, the Hearing Officer on June 21, 2006 reviewed Conditional Use Permit #4253 (CUP #4253) and imposed additional conditions to address this issue. On September 20, 2006, the Board of Zoning Appeals upheld the Hearing Officer's decision including the added conditions that required: 1) Caltech conduct a neighborhood meeting to clarify concerns with the residents and to create a plan for the full use of the parking structure; 2) that the plan contain strategies and actions that will be taken to insure full use of the 700 space parking structure, and that the plan be submitted to the Zoning Administrator and the Department of Transportation for review and approval; and 3) and if the plan was not effective, a CUP hearing be set for public hearing. On October 9, 2006, the City Council called up the CUP for further review and requested Caltech and the neighbors to continue discussions in resolving the ongoing parking problems and to return to the City Council. Staff is working with Caltech to schedule this for a future Council agenda.

General Plan/Zoning Designations

The General Plan Land Use designation for the Caltech campus is Institutional. To the north and west of the campus is High Density Residential (0-48 dwelling units/net acre), Medium-High Density Residential (0-36 dwelling units/net acre), and Low Density Residential (0-6 dwelling units/net acre). To the south and east of the campus is Low

Density Residential (0-6 dwelling units/net acre). The area to the northeast is also designated Institutional.

The current zoning designation of the Caltech campus is PS (Public and Semi-Public). Surrounding zoning includes RM-48 (Multi-family Residential, 48 dwelling units/net acre) to the north and west; PS to the southwest; RS-4 (Single-family Residential, 4 dwelling units/net acre) and RS-2 (Single-family Residential, 2 dwelling units/net acre) to the south and southeast; and RS-6 (Single-family Residential, 6 dwelling units/net acre) to the northeast).


FINAL SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Pursuant to 15163(a)(2) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) a SEIR was prepared for the Caltech Master Plan amendments. The SEIR (Attachment 7) was prepared for the minor additions and changes that were necessary to make the previous (1989) certified EIR adequate to the proposed project.

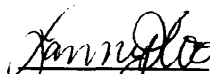
FISCAL IMPACT

There will be no fiscal impact as a result of the proposed amendments to the Caltech Master Development Plan. Caltech will be responsible for all costs associated with the mitigation monitoring program and with meeting the conditions of approval. Permitting fees will be collected for development amendment project to cover the costs incurred from staff time required for project review.


Respectfully submitted,


for CYNTHIA J. KURTZ
CITY MANAGER

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Approved by:


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Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Conditions of Approval for the Caltech Master Development Plan Amendment
- Attachment 2: Map of Amendment Locations on the Caltech Campus and Site Plan for each Development Amendment
- Attachment 3: Revised Design Review Guidelines and Design Review Thresholds
- Attachment 4: Mitigation Measures and Mitigation Monitoring Program
- Attachment 5: De Minimis Impact Finding on the State Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Attachment 6: Notice of Determination
Attachment 7: Final Supplemental EIR for the Caltech Master Development Plan
Amendment