

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires public agencies to identify, disclose, and consider the potential environmental impacts of proposed discretionary actions that lead agencies are considering for approval. A project that may have a significant impact on the environment cannot be approved unless the lead agency makes the approval contingent upon the implementation of mitigation measures that would reduce or avoid that impact to the extent feasible. When a project may have significant environmental impacts, the lead agency must prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) before it considers whether to approve the project.

The City of Lancaster (City), as the lead agency for the proposed project, has prepared this Draft EIR for public review and comment. As discussed below, the Draft EIR will be available for review and comment by public agencies and the general public for a period of 45 days. Prior to considering the proposed project, the City will prepare a Final EIR that includes the Draft EIR, the comments received on the Draft EIR, written responses to those comments, a list of the commenters, and any revisions being made to the Draft EIR in response to the comments. The Final EIR will be considered by the City's discretionary bodies when taking action on the proposed project.

1.1.1 Purpose and Authority

This Draft EIR has been prepared pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] 15000 et seq.). CEQA requires that State and local government agencies consider the environmental consequences of projects over which they have discretionary authority before taking action on those projects (California Public Resources Code [PRC] 21000 et seq.).

The purpose of this Draft EIR is to analyze the environmental impacts of the proposed project, to indicate ways to reduce or avoid potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project, and to identify alternatives. CEQA requires that each public agency mitigate or avoid the significant environmental effects of projects it approves or implements whenever feasible.

An EIR is an informational document used in State, regional, and local planning and decision-making processes to meet the requirements of CEQA. The purpose of the EIR is not to recommend approval or denial of a project. However, the City's decision whether to approve or to deny the project must take into consideration the information provided by the EIR. A public agency may approve a project even if it would result in significant and unavoidable environmental impacts.

The Draft EIR must disclose the proposed project's environmental effects, including those that cannot be avoided; growth inducing effects; effects found not to be significant; and cumulative impacts.

1.1.2 Type of Environmental Impact Report

This is a Draft EIR that describes the proposed project and the level of detail in this Draft EIR matches the level of detail available in the draft plans for the proposed project. Additional resource-specific studies such as air quality, biological resources, and cultural resources, as well as others, have been prepared for this Draft EIR to provide detailed information about the proposed project's potential impacts on the environment. The mitigation measures identified in this Draft EIR are sufficiently detailed to ensure that they would be effectively carried out to reduce the proposed project's impacts.

1.1.3 Lead Agency Determination

The City of Lancaster is designated as the lead agency for the proposed project. CEQA Guidelines Section 15367 defines the lead agency as ". . . the public agency, which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project." Other public agencies may use this document in their decision making or permit processes (e.g., Los Angeles County, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), etc.).

This Draft EIR was prepared by the City of Lancaster with technical assistance provided by Stantec Consulting Services Inc., an environmental consultant. Prior to public review, this Draft EIR was extensively reviewed and evaluated by the City of Lancaster staff and as such; the Draft EIR reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the City of Lancaster as required by CEQA. Lists of organizations and persons consulted, and the report preparation personnel, are provided in Section 7 of this Draft EIR.

1.1.4 Project of Statewide, Regional, or Area wide Environmental Significance

CEQA Guidelines Section 15206 identifies the types of projects considered to be of Statewide, Regional, or Areawide Significance. When a project is classified as regionally significant, its Draft EIR shall be submitted to the State Clearinghouse of the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), as well as the appropriate metropolitan area council of government.

The proposed project meets the following criteria defining projects of Statewide, Regional, or Areawide Significance:

- The proposed project would require a general plan amendment (GPA) and an EIR is being prepared.

1.2 SCOPE OF THE DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR addresses the potential environmental effects of the proposed project. The City distributed a notice of preparation (NOP) of a Draft EIR for the proposed project beginning on July 23, 2014. The NOP was distributed for a 30-day comment period that ended on August 21, 2014. The comments on the NOP were considered in the preparation of this Draft EIR. The scope of this Draft EIR includes the potential environmental impacts identified in the NOP and issues raised by agencies and the public in response to the NOP. Copies of the NOP and comments received during the NOP comment period are contained in Appendix A of this Draft EIR.

Table 1-1: NOP Comment Letters lists the comment letters received during the project scoping period.

Table 1-1: NOP Comment Letters

Affiliation	Signatory	Date
Public Agencies		
State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit	Scott Morgan, Director, State of California, Governor's Office of Planning and Research	July 24, 2014
Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District (AVAQMD)	Bret Banks, Operations Manager	July 29, 2014
Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC)	Gayle Totton, Program Analyst	July 30, 2014
Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACFD)	Frank Vidales, Chief, Forestry Division, Prevention Services Bureau	August 14, 2014
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA)	Xin Tong, Development Review Coordinator, Metro Planning Department	August 15, 2014
Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)	Tom Browne, PhD, PE, Water Resources Control Engineer	August 20, 2014
California Department of Water Resources (DWR)	David M. Samson, Chief, State Water Project Operations Support Office, Division of Operations and Maintenance	August 20, 2014
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)	Betty J. Courtney, Environmental Program Manager I, South Coast Region	August 21, 2014

Affiliation	Signatory	Date
County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works	Ruben Cruz, PE, Land Development Division	August 21, 2014
Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)	Jonathan Nadler, Manager, Compliance and Performance Assessment	August 21, 2014
Utilities		
Southern California Gas Company	Tim Bruce, Planning Associate, Lancaster District	July 29, 2014
Southern California Edison (SCE)	Dianne Knippel, Region Manager, Local Public Affairs	August 21, 2014
Private Parties- Written		
Interested Individual	Floyd A. Bortoluzzi	July 28, 2014
Interested Individual	Jared Janke	July 29, 2014
Interested Individual	David and Nancy G. Maltos	August 4, 2014
Interested Individual	Albert Grigorian	August 5, 2014
Interested Individual	Martin Tatum	August 6, 2014
Interested Individual	Donald and Laurie O'Connor	August 14, 2014
Interested Individual	Olin Hanson	August 14, 2014
Interested Individual	Carol Brunet	August 14, 2014
CA-DF Investment Fund 8, LLC	Chad J. Stadnicki, Project Manager	August 15, 2014
Interested Individual	Evangeline Padiernos	August 17, 2014

Affiliation	Signatory	Date
Interested Individual	Guadalupe Gandingco	August 18, 2014
Private Parties- Oral ¹		
Interested Individual	Laurie O'Connor	August 14, 2014
Interested Individual	Linda Hanson	August 14, 2014
Interested Individual	Olin Hanson	August 14, 2014
Interested Individual	Don O'Connor	August 14, 2014
¹ City of Lancaster, Timothy Scott, CSR No. 8517, August 14, 2014.		

1.2.1 Location and Overview

The project site is located in the Antelope Valley in the northern portion of Los Angeles County, completely within the City of Lancaster. All of the gen-tie routes, with the exception of Gen-tie Route 2, are located partially within unincorporated Los Angeles County. The project site consists of approximately 1,191 acres and is generally bounded by Avenue K, 105th Street West, 80th Street West and the California Aqueduct. The proposed project encompasses the following assessor's parcel numbers (APNs): 3248-009-001 thru -002, 3248-010-002, 3248-010-005 thru -007, 3248-010-012, 3248-010-063, 3248-011-002, 3248-011-004 thru -007, 3248-011-016 thru -019, 3248-011-025 thru -026, 3248-011-032 thru -035, 3248-012-001 thru -002, 3248-012-004, 3248-012-007 thru -015, 3248-012-018 thru -023, 3248-012-025 thru -027, 3248-013-001 thru -003, 3248-021-001 thru -009, 3248-021-011, 3248-021-013 thru -016, 3248-021-019 thru -021, 3248-021-025 thru -027, 3248-021-031 thru -038, 3248-021-040, 3248-021-045 thru -049, 3248-021-051 thru -053, and 3248-022-001.

The proposed project consists of the construction and operation of a 150 megawatt (MW) solar facility, including a switching station and up to two gen-tie lines that would ultimately connect to a previously approved collector substation near 100th Street West and Avenue J. The proposed project could also potentially connect to LADWP infrastructure. The City's zoning ordinance allows solar facilities on property zoned RR-2.5 (rural residential, minimum lot size 2.5 acres) with a conditional use permit (CUP). The project site is designated by the City's General Plan as a mix of NU (Non-Urban Residential), UR (Urban Residential), and C (Commercial) and is zoned RR-2.5 and SP (Specific Plan). As such the applicant (sPower) has requested a GPA and zone change (ZC) to change the designation on the entire site to NU and the zoning to RR-2.5.

The proposed project would be constructed in phases and operated for a period of at least 35 years. The proposed project would consist of the following elements: photovoltaic (PV) modules, module mounting systems, electrical inverters and transformers, electrical alternating current (AC) collection system, including switchgear, data monitoring equipment, transmission and gen-tie lines, and access roads and security fencing.

The solar field would consist of single-axis tracking or fixed-tilt systems laid out in a common PV block design to allow for sufficient access. A series of PV module arrays would be mounted on racking systems supported by a vibratory-driven foundation design. The modules would be oriented toward the south and angled at a degree that would optimize solar resource efficiency. For the single-axis tracking configuration, the modules would rotate from east to west over the course of the day. Electrical connections from a series of PV arrays would be channeled to combiner boxes located throughout the solar field. Electrical current would be collected and combined prior to feeding the inverters. Inverters would be consolidated in areas to minimize cable routing, trenching, and electrical losses. The final output from the facility would be processed through a transformer to match the interconnection voltage. All electrical inverters, transformers, and gear would be placed on concrete foundation structures.

At each of the inverters, the output of the 34.5 kilovolt (kV) transformers would be collected onto common 34.5 kV feeders. The 34.5 kV feeders would be routed either overhead or underground to the onsite switching station. Electricity at the onsite switching station would be consolidated and remain at 34.5 kV or be stepped up to 66 kV. From the switching station, multiple 34.5 or 66 kV feeders would be constructed along one of the potential gen-tie routes to the previously approved collector substation at 100th Street West and Avenue J. These feeders would either run overhead on wooden poles approximately 45 to 50 feet in height, with a pole span of approximately 520 feet, or underground. The collector substation would use open air 34.5 or 66 kV switchgear to tie in the various feeders. As many as five generator step up transformers would convert the output to 220 kV. A 220 kV rigid metal bus would be installed to collect the output of each transformer and feed into one gen-tie line. The 220 kV gen-tie line would deliver the entire collector substation's output onto SCE's Antelope Substation 220 kV bus. Redundant fiber optic cables would also be routed underground between the collector substation and Antelope Substation for use by SCE.

Additionally, the proposed project has the potential to interconnect to LADWP's Barren Ridge-Rinaldi 230 kV transmission line at one of the following locations: 1) near the intersection of Avenue J and 130th Street West; 2) Avenue I and 125th Street West; or 3) Avenue G and 120th Street W. The proposed project would connect to a newly constructed LADWP switching station via an overhead or underground gen-tie (up to 230kV) from the project site. The new 230 kV switching station would be owned and operated by LADWP.

A detailed description of the proposed project can be found in Section 2.0, Project Description.

1.2.2 Environmental Issues Determined Not To Be Significant

Pursuant to CEQA, the discussion of the potential effects on the physical environment is focused on those impacts that may be significant or potentially significant. CEQA allows a lead agency to limit the details of discussion of the environmental effects that are not considered potentially significant (PRC Section 21100, CCR Sections 15126.2[a] and 15128). CEQA requires that the discussion of any significant effects on the environment be limited to substantial or potentially substantial adverse changes in physical conditions that exist within the affected area, as defined in PRC Section 21060.5 (Statutory definition of "environment"). Effects dismissed in an analysis as clearly insignificant and unlikely to occur need not be discussed further in the Draft EIR unless the lead agency subsequently receives information inconsistent with the finding (CCR Section 15143).

As part of the NOP Scoping process, it was determined that implementation of the proposed project would result in no impact or less than significant environmental impacts (with or without mitigation) related to the following resources; therefore, with the exception of a cursory impact discussion in Section 4, Effects Found Not To Be Significant, these environmental resources areas are not discussed at further length in this Draft EIR:

- Mineral Resources.

In addition, certain subjects within various topical areas were determined not to be significant. Other potentially significant issues are analyzed within these topical areas; however, the following issues are not analyzed:

- Forest Land Zoning and Conversion (Section 3.2, Agriculture).
- Odors (Section 3.3, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases).
- Conflict with Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Plan (Section 3.4, Biological Resources and Section 3.9, Land Use, Population and Housing).
- Incapable of Supporting Alternative Waste Water Systems (Section 3.6, Geology and Soils).
- Hazardous Materials Near an Existing or Proposed School (Section 3.7, Hazards and Hazardous Materials).
- Airports and Private Airstrips (Section 3.7, Hazards and Hazardous Materials).
- 100-Year Flood Hazards (Section 3.8, Hydrology and Water Quality).
- Displacement of Housing or People (Section 3.9, Land Use, Population and Housing).
- Aviation Noise (Section 3.10, Noise).

1.2.3 Effects Determined To Be Potentially Significant

The NOP found the following topical areas may contain potentially significant environmental issues that would require further analysis in the EIR. In accordance with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, the following resources areas will be evaluated in this Draft EIR:

- Aesthetics.
- Agriculture.
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases.
- Biological Resources.
- Cultural Resources.
- Geology and Soils.
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials.
- Hydrology and Water Quality.
- Land Use, Population and Housing.
- Noise.
- Public Services, Utilities, Service Systems, and Recreation.

- Transportation and Traffic.

1.3 ORGANIZATION OF THE DRAFT EIR

This Draft EIR is arranged into the following sections, which contain the contents of an EIR as required by CEQA Guidelines Sections 15120 through 15132.

Section ES: Executive Summary. The Executive Summary section provides a summary of the proposed project and the project alternatives, including a summary of project impacts, recommended mitigation measures, and the level of significance after mitigation for each environmental issue.

Section 1: Introduction. The Introduction section provides an overview of the proposed project and the CEQA process and describes the purpose, scope, and components of this Draft EIR.

Section 2: Project Description. The Project Description section provides a detailed description of the proposed project, including the location and project characteristics. The intended uses of this Draft EIR, project background, project objectives, and required project approvals are also addressed.

Section 3: Environmental Impact Analysis. The Environmental Impact Analysis section analyzes the environmental effects of the proposed project. Impacts are organized into major environmental topic areas. Each topic area includes a description of the regulatory setting, environmental setting, significance criteria, project impacts, mitigation measures, and level of significance after mitigation. This section also addresses the cumulative impacts for each resource. The specific environmental topic areas that are addressed in Section 3 include the following:

- Section 3.1 – Aesthetics
- Section 3.2 – Agriculture
- Section 3.3 - Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases
- Section 3.4 - Biological Resources
- Section 3.5 - Cultural Resources
- Section 3.6 - Geology and Soils
- Section 3.7 - Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Section 3.8 - Hydrology and Water Quality
- Section 3.9 - Land Use, Population and Housing
- Section 3.10 - Noise
- Section 3.11 - Public Services, Utilities, Service Systems, and Recreation
- Section 3.12 - Transportation and Traffic

Section 4: Effects Found Not To Be Significant. The Effects Found Not To Be Significant section provides a summary of project impacts that have been determined, through preparation of the NOP, to result in less than significant or no impact.

Section 5: Other CEQA Considerations. The Other CEQA Considerations section provides a summary of significant environmental effects, including unavoidable, irreversible, and growth-inducing impacts.

Section 6: Alternatives to the Proposed Project. The Alternatives to the Proposed Project section provides a comparison between the impacts associated with the proposed project and the three project alternatives: the No Project/No Development Alternative, the No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative, and the Reduced Size and Increased Setback Alternative. Additionally, this section discusses those alternatives which were considered and deemed to be infeasible.

Section 7: List of Preparers and Organizations Consulted. The List of Preparers and Organizations Consulted section provides a list of the organizations and persons consulted, and the various individuals who contributed to the preparation of this Draft EIR. This section also includes a listing of the lead agency personnel and technical consultants used to prepare this Draft EIR.

Section 8: References. This References section provides a listing of the technical studies and other documents used to prepare this Draft EIR.

Appendices. The appendices contain the NOP (including comments) and technical studies prepared to support the analyses and conclusions in this Draft EIR.

1.4 DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

As permitted by CEQA Guidelines Section 15150, this Draft EIR references several technical studies, analyses, and previously certified environmental documents. Information from the documents, which has been incorporated by reference, is briefly summarized in the appropriate section(s). The relationship between the incorporated part of the referenced document and the Draft EIR is also described. The documents and other sources that are utilized in the preparation of this Draft EIR include, but are not limited to:

- City of Lancaster General Plan 2030;
- City of Lancaster General Plan 2030 Program EIR;
- City of Lancaster Municipal Code; and
- City of Lancaster General Plan 2030 Master Environmental Assessment.

These documents are specifically identified in Section 8, References, of this Draft EIR. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15150(b), the City of Lancaster General Plan 2030, City of Lancaster Municipal Code, the City of Lancaster General Plan 2030 Master Environmental Assessment, and the referenced documents used in the preparation of this Draft EIR are available for review at the City of Lancaster Development Services Department.

1.5 PREVIOUSLY PREPARED ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS

The following technical studies and analyses were previously prepared for prior projects on or in close proximity to the project site. As such, they have been reviewed and incorporated in this Draft EIR as needed:

- Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, Two 10-Acre Undeveloped Parcels, Southwest Corner of Intersection of West Avenue L and 90th Street West, Los Angeles County, California 93536 (APNs: 3248-012-018 and 3248-012-020) (Stantec 2010).
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, Lancaster Highlands Site, Generally 80th Street West to 110th Street West, Between Avenue L and Avenue M, Lancaster, Los Angeles County, California 93536, (Stantec 2011).
- Preliminary Geotechnical Engineering Report, Lancaster Highlands Master-Planned Community, Avenue L and 80th Street West, Lancaster, Los Angeles County, California (Earth Systems Southern California 2007).

1.6 DOCUMENTS PREPARED FOR THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The following technical studies and analyses were prepared for the proposed project:

- Lancaster Energy Center Cultural Resources Assessment (BCR Consulting LLC 2014).
- Lancaster Energy Center EIR- CUP 14-10- Cultural Resources Study Third Party Review Memo (Stantec-CUL 2014a).
- Lancaster Energy Center Cup 14-10 Supplemental Archaeological Survey Report For The Proposed Lancaster Energy Center Three Augmented 230kv Gen-Tie Line Alignments (Stantec-CUL 2014b).
- Lancaster Solar Generating Facility General Biological Resources Assessment (NOEAS 2014a).
- Lancaster Energy Center Project Jurisdictional Determination (NOEAS 2014b).
- Lancaster Energy Center EIR- CUP 14-10- Biological Resources Technical Report Peer Review Memo (Stantec-BIO 2014a).
- Lancaster Energy Center EIR- CUP 14-10- Supplemental Biological Resources Technical Memo for Addition of New Gen-tie Lines (Stantec-BIO 2014b).
- Lancaster Energy Center Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (Stantec 2014).
- Lancaster Energy Center Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases Analyses (Stantec 2014).
- Lancaster Energy Center Noise Study (Stantec 2014).

1.7 REVIEW OF THE DRAFT EIR

CEQA does not require formal hearings at any stage of the environmental review process (CEQA Guidelines Section 15202[a]). However, it does encourage “wide public involvement, formal and informal, in order to receive and evaluate public reactions to environmental issues” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15201). The City distributed a NOP of a draft EIR for the project beginning on

July 23, 2014. The NOP was distributed for a 30-day comment period that ended on August 21, 2014. The comments on the NOP were considered in the preparation of this EIR. Appendix A contains the written comments received on the NOP.

Upon completion of the Draft EIR, the City of Lancaster will file a Notice of Completion (NOC) with the State Office of Planning and Research to begin the public review period (PRC, Section 21161). Concurrent with the NOC, this Draft EIR has been distributed to responsible and trustee agencies, other affected agencies, surrounding cities, and interested parties, as well as all parties requesting a copy of the Draft EIR in accordance with 21092(b)(3). During the public review period, the Draft EIR, including the technical appendices, are available for review at City of Lancaster, Development Services Department, 44933 Fern Avenue, Lancaster, California; the Lancaster Library at 601 Lancaster Boulevard; and online at www.cityoflanasterca.org.

Agencies, organizations, and interested parties have the opportunity to comment on this Draft EIR during the 45-day public review period. Written comments on this Draft EIR should be addressed to:

City of Lancaster
Attn: Jocelyn Swain, Associate Planner - Environmental
44933 Fern Avenue
Lancaster, CA 93534

Comments may also be emailed to jswain@cityoflanasterca.org or faxed to (661) 723-6182.

Upon completion of the public review period, written responses to all environmental issues raised will be prepared and made available for review by the commenting agencies at least 10 days prior to any public hearing on the proposed project, at which the certification of the Final EIR will be considered. Comments received and the responses to comments will be included as part of the record for consideration by decision makers for the proposed project.

1.7.1 Effectively Commenting on an EIR

Readers are invited to review and comment on the adequacy and completeness of this Draft EIR in describing the potential impacts of the proposed project, the level of severity, the mitigation measures being proposed to reduce or avoid those impacts, and the project alternatives being considered. The most effective comments are those that focus on the adequacy and completeness of the environmental analysis and that are supported by factual evidence. Comments that focus on whether the proposed project should be approved or denied are not comments on the adequacy of this Draft EIR.

1.7.2 Final EIR

After the end of the review period, the City will review the comments received, prepare written responses to those comments, make any related revisions to the Draft EIR, and publish the Final EIR.

The Final EIR will be considered by the City's Planning Commission and City Council when taking action on the proposed project. If the proposed project is approved, CEQA requires the City to

adopt findings describing how each of the significant impacts identified in the EIR is being mitigated. The findings will describe the reasons why significant unavoidable impacts, if any, cannot be mitigated. The findings will also describe the reasons why project alternatives that were analyzed in the EIR have not been adopted. If the proposed project has significant and unavoidable impacts, the City will also adopt a statement of overriding considerations describing the benefits of the proposed project that outweigh its environmental impacts. Finally, the City will adopt a mitigation monitoring and reporting plan that describes how it will ensure the mitigation measures being required of the proposed project will be carried out.