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**GUIDE  
TO UNDERSTANDING  
CEQA  
IN THE  
CITY OF LOS ANGELES**

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Prepared by the  
City of Los Angeles

Environmental Affairs  
Department

*An  
Easy-to-Use  
Primer  
on  
the  
California  
Environmental  
Quality  
Act*

# CEQA DIRECTORY AND UPDATE INFORMATION (as of 01/05)

Updates have **NOT** been made in the booklet. Please refer to this page for the most recent changes regarding: *phone numbers, prices and timelines.*

## City Planning Department

Environmental Review Section (213) 978-1332  
 • Subdivision • Parcel Map • Zone Change • Zone Variance •  
 • General Plan Amendment • CUP • Site Plan Review •

### CEQA Processing Fees\*

Exemption	\$58
Negative Declaration	\$679
EIR	Cost Recovery

### General Processing Time\*\*

Exemption	same day
Negative Declaration	8 weeks
EIR	1 year

### Public Notices

Notices are placed in the Thursday edition of the *Los Angeles Times* and posted at [www.lacity.org/PLN](http://www.lacity.org/PLN)

## Department of Transportation

Transportation Planning (213) 485-1062	Off-street Parking Projects (213) 972-4909
Pipeline Franchise Section (213) 580-1268	Preferential Parking Districts (213) 913-4600

• Traffic Impact Analysis •

### CEQA Processing Fees\*

Exemption	None
Negative Declaration	\$200-500
EIR	\$2,268 - \$25,000

## Department of Building & Safety

Preservation Coordinator  
(213) 482-6881  
 • New Construction • Alteration • Demolition • Use Change •

## Department of Public Works

### Bureau of Engineering

Environmental Group (213) 847-8815  
 • A, B, U, E, Watercourse & Coastal Development permits •

## Community Development Department

Environmental Section (213) 847-4308  
 • Development with Partial or Total Funding from CDD •

### General Processing Time\*\*

Exemption	7 days
Negative Declaration	45 days
EIR	4-6 months

### Public Notices

Notices placed in a general circulation newspaper.

## Los Angeles Housing Department

Environmental Compliance Officer (213) 808-8924  
 • Development with Partial or Total Funding from LAHD •

### CEQA Processing Fees\*

Exemptions	None
Negative Declaration	None
EIR	service not offered

### General Processing Time\*\*

Exemption	1-2 weeks
Negative Declaration	60 Days
EIR	service not offered

## Department of Recreation and Parks

Environmental Management and Compliance Section (213) 928-9130  
 (213) 928-9191  
 • Development on City Parklands •

### General Processing Time\*

Exemption 1-14 days

## Community Redevelopment Agency

Environmental Planning (213) 997-1952

### CEQA Processing Fees\*

Exemption	\$49
Negative Declaration	\$771
EIR	\$6,980 - \$11,432

• Development in Redevelopment Areas • Projects with Partial or Total CRA funding •

## Los Angeles World Airports

Environmental Management Bureau (310) 646-3853

• Tenant Development Projects • Lease Agreements •

### Public Notices

Notices are published in the Thursday edition of the *Los Angeles Times* and, depending on the scope of the project, in local and area newspapers.

## Harbor Department

Environmental Management Section (310) 732-3675

• Tenant Projects at the Port of Los Angeles •

### CEQA Processing Fees\*

Exemption	None
Negative Declaration	None
EIR	Cost Recovery

### General Processing Time\*\*

Exemption	2 weeks
Negative Declaration	6-9 months
EIR	1 year

## Department of Water and Power

Environmental Assessments (213) 367-0285

• Water Rights • Water or Power Rights of Way •

• New Water or Power Resources •

### General Processing Time\*\*

Exemption	1 day
Negative Declaration	6-9 months
EIR	9-18 months

\*As of January 2005. Subject to change.

\*\*From time application deemed complete.

**GUIDE  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This guide provides information to help project applicants, members of the public, and City staff understand the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process in the City of Los Angeles. Although the focus is on how CEQA applies to **private projects**, there is useful information about the environmental review of public projects and how departments participate in the review of projects under the lead of another City department.

In addition, there is an explanation of the CEQA process and an introduction into where CEQA fits in the City's project approval and permitting framework (including entitlements). Specific departmental information can be found, related to:

- projects subject to CEQA
- CEQA processing fees
- general processing time
- typical public noticing
- environmental review process

The CEQA process, established by state law, requires the review of proposed projects in order to identify and address potential environmental effects. A project, under CEQA, is defined as the whole of an action which has the potential to physically change the environment, directly or ultimately, that is subject to discretionary governmental approval. Once it is determined that a project requires discretionary approval, it must then be determined whether or not the project is exempt from CEQA.

Projects which are not exempt from CEQA require a Negative Declaration or an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). When a project does not result in any significant effects on the environment, or project modification and/or mitigation measures reduce these impacts to a less than significant level, a Negative Declaration is prepared. An EIR must be prepared if a proposed project may have one or more potentially significant effects on the environment that cannot be mitigated to a less than significant level.

### WHAT IS A PROJECT?

An activity is considered a project under CEQA, if it is:

- An activity involving the issuance by the City of a lease, permit, license, certificate, or other entitlement.
- An activity undertaken by a person supported by the City through contracts, grants, subsidies, loans, or other forms of assistance from the City; or,
- Any activity undertaken by the City including, but not limited to, public works construction, clearing or grading, improvements to existing public structures, enactment and amendment of zoning ordinances, or adoption and amendment of local General Plans;

An activity is not considered a project under CEQA if it is:

- An activity specifically exempted by state law;
- A submittal of a proposal to a vote of the people;
- A proposal for legislation to be enacted by the State Legislature; or
- Creation of specific government funding mechanisms or fiscal activities.

# CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

The Environmental Review Section prepares the CEQA documents for discretionary land use entitlements as well as projects of the Building and Safety Department which require a Negative Declaration or EIR. However, the City Planning Department is not the Lead Agency for projects in the jurisdiction of another City or governmental agency (i.e., a project of the LA Housing Department, MFA, or in an adopted redevelopment area).

When an applicant requests an approval from the Planning Department, staff at the Public Counter determines whether the project qualifies for an exemption from CEQA. If the project is not exempt or could possibly have a significant impact, an Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) must be submitted. The EAF helps with the evaluation of potential project impacts. The Environmental Review Section consults with the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (DOT) on possible traffic impacts. If a traffic study is necessary, it must be prepared and approved by DOT before an Initial Study is completed.

The Initial Study is reviewed by the Environmental Staff Advisory Committee (ESAC) at its weekly meetings. The ESAC recommends to management whether a Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or EIR is appropriate.

For EIRs, the Planning Department includes preliminary issue scoping meetings with the applicant, City departments and other agencies. The Notice of Preparation is prepared and circulated to interested agencies and parties. The database includes information submitted by the applicant which is used to prepare the Draft EIR. It may be distributed for inter-departmental review. The Draft EIR is released for a minimum 45-day public review period. Following this, the Department prepares the Response to Comments and Final EIR.

### Key Private Projects

- Subdivision, Parcel Map
- Zone Change, Zone Variance
- General Plan Amendment
- Conditional Use Permit (CUP)
- Site Plan Review

### CEQA Processing Fees\*

Exemption	\$49
Negative Declaration	\$578
EIR	\$4,479 - 21,444

### General Processing Time\*\*

Exemption	same day
Negative Declaration	3 weeks
EIR	1 year

### Public Notices

Notices are placed in the Thursday edition of the *Los Angeles Times*.

\* As of June 1996. Subject to change. Cost recovery charge and surcharge for EIRs. A fee is collected at the time the Environmental Assessment Form is filed.

\*\* From the time the application is deemed complete. Does not take into account the publication period and response to public comments for a Negative Declaration.

### For more information, call:

Environmental Review Section  
(213) 580-5547

When a Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration is prepared, the Environmental notice is published for a comment/review period of 20 days (30 days if it is sent to the State Clearinghouse):

Following this, the Department prepares a Response to Comments, if necessary, and finalizes the Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration.

The CEQA fee for an exemption is paid when the Notice of Exemption is finished. Similarly, a fee is collected at the time the Environmental Assessment Form is filed. Half of the additional fee for an EIR is paid when the NOP is circulated with the balance due when the Draft EIR is completed.

Applicants normally pay for the preparation of the databases, by their own consultants, under

the direction of City Planning. All documents prepared by an applicant's consultant are subject to review, amendment, and approval by City Planning. The Draft and Final EIRs are City documents.

Assistance from entitlement managers in the Planning Department is available during all phases of the process.

After the CEQA review, the project approval process continues and includes a public hearing before the City Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator, or Hearing Examiner for consideration of the project application. A written decision is then prepared. The applicant or an aggrieved party may appeal the decision, in which case a second public hearing is held and a written decision prepared. Certain matters may be further appealed to the City Council.

### Decision-makers for Main City Planning Actions\*

Action	Decisions	Appeals
Variances and some Conditional Use Permits	Zoning Administrator	Board of Zoning Appeals and/or City Council
General Plan Amendment, Specific Plan Exception, Zone Changes, and some Conditional Use Permits	City Planning Commission	City Council**
Site Plan Review	Site Plan Review Staff	City Planning Commission and City Council (if necessary)
Subdivisions	Advisory Agency	City Planning Commission and City Council (if necessary)
Parcel Maps	Advisory Agency	Board of Zoning Appeals and City Council (if necessary)

\* These are the most commonly used decision processes. Other planning decision processes are available but are not listed here. Any item sent to the Council is also reviewed by the Mayor for his approval or disapproval. The Mayor may approve or disapprove a recommendation prior to or following Council decision.

\*\* Based on recommendation from the Planning and Land Use Management Committee of the City Council.

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The Department of Transportation (DOT) is the Lead Agency for preferential parking districts, off-street parking projects funded by DOT, and pipeline franchise projects solely or largely in the City. Traffic studies required for projects are evaluated by the Bureau of Transportation Planning.

In most cases DOT participates with another City department which acts as the Lead Agency. Usually, the Bureau of Transportation Planning's responsibility is to review traffic impact studies and return comments to the Lead Agency and applicant, as appropriate. DOT may respond to another agency's Notice of Preparation (NOP) or other document (EIR or Negative Declaration).

Preferential parking districts and public, off-street parking projects usually involve submittal of an application and review by DOT in consultation with other agencies. DOT also involves the community in the design of public off-street parking projects when feasible in order to develop mitigation measures and address concerns early. After completing any required environmental documents and technical studies, a report is prepared. A public hearing is held for preferential parking districts. The Board of Transportation Commissioners approves a project subject to City Council review and approval.

For pipeline franchises, applicants work with the Pipeline Franchise section to understand the submittal requirements, which include an application letter to the City Council. DOT reviews the application, conducts an investigation and prepares the CEQA document before sending a report to the City Council.

### Key Private Projects

- Private pipeline franchises
- Preferential parking districts
- Public, off-street parking projects funded by DOT

### CEQA Processing Fees\*

Exemption	None
Negative Declaration	\$25
EIR	\$1,000 - 10,000

### General Processing Time\*\*

Exemption	2 - 7 weeks
Negative Declaration	1 - 6 months
EIR	6 - 24 months

### Public Notices

Notices are placed in local and area newspapers and mailed to adjacent owners.

\* As of June 1996. Subject to change. Applicants reimburse DOT and other departments for the actual processing costs attributable to the project.

\*\* From time application deemed complete.

### For more information, call:

Bureau of Transportation Planning  
(213) 580-5209  
Off-Street Parking Projects  
(213) 485-9543  
Pipeline Franchise Section  
(213) 580-1265  
Preferential Parking Districts  
(213) 913-4614

## DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING & SAFETY

Applications for permits from Building and Safety (B & S) are received by Plan Check Engineers at the Public Counter. Projects which might be subject to CEQA are applications involving historic features, some grading activities, product approvals, and projects requiring Planning discretionary actions.

Projects at sites identified as City monuments or eligible for, or listed on, the National Register of Historic Places are referred by Plan Check Engineers to the Preservation Coordinator for CEQA review. A project located in an adopted redevelopment project area is referred to the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) which prepares the CEQA documentation. The Cultural Heritage Commission participates in the evaluation of City monuments.

If the project is not in a redevelopment area, not a City monument, nor exempt from CEQA, the Planning Department prepares the Negative Declaration or EIR, if necessary.

After completing any applicable CEQA requirements, the project approval process continues. Assistance from the Case Manager Unit is available during all phases of the permit process. Some permits are issued over the counter. Others require extended plan check, which includes review of the submitted plans by City engineers. A list of required plan corrections is given to the applicant who then makes the changes. Once the revised plans are re-submitted and verified by staff, a permit is then issued. Inspections are made during construction, and a Certificate of Occupancy is issued upon successful completion of the project.

### Key Private Projects

- New construction
- Alteration, Addition
- Demolition
- Change of Use (Buildings)

### CEQA Processing Fees\*

Exemption	None
Negative Declaration	N/A
EIR	N/A

### General Processing Time\*\*

Exemption	same day
Negative Declaration	N/A
EIR	N/A

### Public Notices

Notices are placed in the *Daily Journal*.

\* As of June 1996. Subject to change.

\*\* From time application deemed complete.

### For more information, call:

Preservation Coordinator  
(213) 237-1846



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS:  
**BUREAU OF ENGINEERING**

The Bureau of Engineering (BOE) acts as Lead Agency for private projects only when a permit from BOE is required or there is encroachment into the public right-of-way and no other discretionary approvals from other City departments are required. The majority of these projects are ministerial or qualify for a categorical exemption.

A-permits are ministerial, and are therefore, exempt. Sewer permits, storm drain connection permits, most excavation permits, and engineering permits issued in accordance with an entitlement for use previously granted, are also ministerial projects.

In the rare instance where the BOE is the Lead Agency for a private project which requires environmental documentation, Bureau staff determines and prepares the appropriate CEQA document for subsequent consideration and certification/adoption by the Board of Public Works and City Council.

To encourage public participation, public hearings are held for all EIRs and an opportunity for a public hearing is provided for all Negative Declarations.

After completing any applicable CEQA requirements, A-permits are usually issued over-the-counter, while others require extended plan check. B-permit plans may require more extensive review by BOE and, possibly, the Bureau of Street Lighting and/or Department of Transportation. The applicant receives the required plan corrections so the plans can be revised and resubmitted. After verification that the changes were made, the permit is issued by the City Engineer. The applicant posts a bond for the estimated cost of the work, and the project account is balanced upon completion.

**Key Private Projects**

- A-permit (curbs, sidewalks, driveways, public easement work)
- B-permit (streets, sewers, storm drains, street lighting, signals)
- U-permit (utility undergrounding)
- E-permit (excavation)
- Coastal development (public property)
- Watercourse permit

**CEQA Processing Fees\***

Exemption	\$500
Negative Declaration	\$15,000
EIR	\$76,000

**General Processing Time\*\***

Exemption	1 - 2 days
Negative Declaration	3 - 9 months
EIR	8 - 24 months

**Public Notices**

Notices are placed in the *Los Angeles Times* (generally on Thursday) and, when appropriate, a local or non-English publication; mailed to adjacent owners; and posted on-site.

\* Time & materials estimates as of June 1996. Fees are actual processing costs attributed to a project and vary with the project's scope. Exclusive of fees for permit and plan check.

\*\* From time application deemed complete.

**For more information, call:**

Environmental Management Section  
(213)847-8695

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

The Environmental Section processes the CEQA clearances for projects of the Community Development Department (activities with partial or total funding from the Community Development Department), regardless of the type of entitlements and permits required.

Applicants working with the Community Development Department (CDD) to implement a project are guided through the project approval process by CDD planners and project managers. For CDD projects, the required level of environmental review is determined by using an Initial Study.

If a Mitigated Negative Declaration is prepared, a public hearing is scheduled during the review period which typically lasts 21 days.

When federal funds are used, a project must also comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Thus, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is sometimes prepared.

In addition to completing the required environmental review, projects must meet design guidelines and help achieve the fundamental goals of the Community Development Department. Project authorization and funding allocations are subject to the approval of the City Council and are reviewed by the Community and Economic Development Committee of the City Council.

### Key Private Projects

- Any development project with partial or total funding from CDD (i.e., new construction, major rehabilitation, historic properties)

### CEQA Processing Fees\*

Exemption	None
Negative Declaration	None
EIR	None

### General Processing Time\*\*

Exemption	7 days
Negative Declaration	30 days
EIR	180 days

### Public Notices

Notices are placed in a newspaper of general circulation.

\* As of June 1996. Subject to change.

\*\* From time application deemed complete.

### For more information, call:

Environmental Section  
(213) 847-4307

# LOS ANGELES HOUSING DEPARTMENT

The Environmental Compliance Officer conducts the CEQA review for projects of the Los Angeles Housing Department (activities with partial or total funding from the Los Angeles Housing Department) regardless of the type of entitlements and permits required.

The Los Angeles Housing Department (LAHD) is usually both the applicant and lead agency for projects. Under circumstances where there is a project applicant (e.g. private or non-profit developer), Los Angeles Housing Department planners guide the project through the review and approval process.

The Environmental Compliance Officer determines whether the activity is a project under CEQA and, if so, whether it is exempt. Many LAHD projects qualify for a categorical exemption. If the project is not exempt or could possibly have a significant impact, then LAHD prepares an Initial Study and the required CEQA document.

When federal funds are used, LAHD also fulfills the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as necessary.

In addition to having the appropriate environmental review, projects must meet design guidelines and help achieve the goals and objectives of LAHD. Project authorization and funding allocations are approved by the City Council.

### Key Private Projects

- Any development project with partial or total funding from LAHD (i.e., acquisition of land and property, demolition of existing structures, rehabilitation and construction of housing units).

### CEQA Processing Fees\*

Exemption	None
Negative Declaration	None
EIR	None

### General Processing Time\*\*

Exemption	30 days
Negative Declaration	60 days
EIR	1 year

### Public Notices

Notices are placed in the Thursday edition of the *Los Angeles Times*.

\* As of June 1996. Subject to change.

\*\* From time application deemed complete.

### For more information, call:

Environmental Compliance Officer  
(213) 847-7630

## DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION & PARKS

The Department serves as Lead Agency under CEQA for recreational master plans, land acquisitions, and capital improvement projects initiated or undertaken by the City or in cooperation with another public agency. Private projects and activities affecting City parklands and recreation facilities (i.e., oil leases, concession operations, memorials, children's playground areas and sportsfields) are also evaluated.

The Environmental Management & Compliance Section within the Planning and Development Branch is responsible for preparing and overseeing the preparation of the appropriate CEQA documents.

NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) documents are also prepared for recreation and resource management projects undertaken on Corps of Engineers' lands leased by the Department in the Hansen and Sepulveda flood control basins.

The Department issues four major types of entitlements: concession agreements; revocable use permits; lease/operating agreements; and easement/grants of right. Concession agreements are handled by the Revenue Development Section through a Request for Proposal process. Leases/operating agreements and easements/grants of rights are handled by the Land Management Section. Revocable use permits are considered, issued and administered by the Planning & Development Branch and/or one of the three operating regions.

In most cases, entitlements require approval by the Board of Recreation & Park Commissioners, or approval by City Council.

### Key Private Projects

- Development on City parklands (oil leases; concession operations; siting utilities; museums, statues, memorials, and other special facilities; off-leash dog areas; senior citizen centers)

### CEQA Processing Fees\*

Exemption	None
Negative Declaration	None
EIR	None

### General Processing Time\*\*

Exemption	1 day
Negative Declaration	3 - 4 months
EIR	9 - 12 months

### Public Notices

Notices are placed in the *Los Angeles Times* and a local or non-English publication.

\* As of June 1996. Subject to change.

\*\* From time application deemed complete.

### For more information, call:

Environmental Management and  
Compliance Section  
(213) 485-5551  
(213) 485-4831

## COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is the Lead Agency for CEQA review of projects in adopted redevelopment areas and also for CRA projects (partial or total funding from CRA) which might be outside the redemption areas.

The staff person at the Permit Application Counter is the initial point of contact for most applicants and typically will make the determination whether a project is exempt from CEQA. If a project does not qualify for an exemption, staff will refer the application to the Environmental Planning unit for preparation of an Initial Study to determine the potential project impacts.

When considering potential project impacts, the staff may consult with responsible agencies, including the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (DOT). Special technical studies, such as historic assessment and traffic reports, may also be required prior to determining the appropriate level of CEQA review. The Initial Study will lead to the preparation of a Negative Declaration or an EIR.

Permit application projects receiving a Negative Declaration, which do not generate unanticipated controversy, will be approved by the Administration or designee. Those with unanticipated controversy will be taken to the CRA Board of Commissioners for adoption. Projects with agency funding and/or EIRs are taken to the CRA Board for certification and project approval.

In addition to complying with CEQA requirements, activities in Redevelopment Projects are evaluated for conformity with the provisions of the appropriate redevelopment plan. CRA-assisted projects are also subject to a design review process.

### Key Private Projects

- Projects in an adopted redevelopment area
- Development with partial or total funding from CRA

### CEQA Processing Fees\*

Exemption	\$49
Negative Declaration	\$771
EIR	\$6,980 - 11,432

### General Processing Time\*\*

Exemption	generally same day
Negative Declaration	60 days
EIR	9 - 12 months

### Public Notices

Notices are placed in the *Los Angeles Times* and/or a local paper and/or posted on the site.

- \* As of June 2001. Subject to change.
- \* From time application deemed complete.

### For more information, call:

Environmental Planning  
(213) 977-1952

# LOS ANGELES WORLD AIRPORTS

The Environmental Management Division processes the CEQA documentation for activities associated with development or operations of each of Los Angeles' municipal airports: Los Angeles International (LAX), Ontario International (ONT), Palmdale Regional, and Van Nuys Airport.

The Project Management Division processes development applications and the Property Division processes lease requests. Both divisions act as a case management unit. And ensure that the project has received CEQA review prior to any approvals.

Unless a project is exempt, the required level of analysis is determined by using an Initial Study. LAWA does not charge fees for CEQA review. However, applicants normally pay for the preparation of Negative Declarations and EIRs by consultants under the direction of LAWA. CEQA documents prepared by an applicant's consultant are subject to LAWA's review, amendment and approval.

When federal funds are used, a project must also comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

After completing the required environmental review, mitigation measures required by the CEQA clearance will be incorporated into a list of conditions the project is required to meet, including conditions required by other divisions. Most construction approvals are granted by the Executive Director. Lease approval requests are approved by the Board of Airport Commissioners.

## Key Private Projects

- Tenant development projects
- Lease agreements

## CEQA Processing Fees\*

Exemption	None
Negative Declaration	None
EIR	None

## General Processing Time\*\*

Exemption	1 - 14 days
Negative Declaration	3 - 6 months
EIR	6 - 12 months

## Public Notices

Notices are published in the Thursday edition of the Los Angeles Times and depending on the scope of the project local and area newspapers.

\* As of June 2001. Subject to change.

\*\* From time application deemed complete.

## For more information, call:

Environmental Management Division  
(310) 646-3853

## HARBOR DEPARTMENT

The Environmental Management Section is responsible for CEQA review for tenant-related projects at the Port including lease renewal, site clean up, and site development (including the demolition of old facilities and construction of new facilities). The Harbor Department is also the Lead Agency for projects where partial or total funding is provided by the Harbor Department.

Tenants apply to the Property Management Division which distributes sections of the application to other appropriate divisions, including Environmental Management, Planning & Research, and Engineering Plan Check, to review for CEQA compliance, conformity with the Port Risk Management Plan, and engineering requirements, etc.

The Environmental Management Division typically circulates Negative Declarations for a 20-day public review period and holds public hearings on Draft EIRs as warranted. The State Clearinghouse form for EIRs is used instead of the Notice of Completion (NOC).

The Harbor Department does not charge fees for CEQA review. However, applicants may be required to pay for the preparation of EIRs by consultants under the direction of the Harbor Department.

Any plan corrections identified during the project review are submitted to the applicant who then makes the necessary changes. The Property Management Division then goes to the Board of Harbor Commissioners for project approval for lease actions. Engineering Permits are issued by the Engineering Division and do not need approval from the Board of Harbor Commissioners.

### Key Private Projects

- Tenant projects at the Port of Los Angeles: lease renewal, site cleanup, site development (demolition and construction)

### CEQA Processing Fees\*

Exemption	None
Negative Declaration	None
EIR	None

### General Processing Time\*\*

Exemption	same day
Negative Declaration	3 months
EIR	12 months

### Public Notices

Notices are placed in local and area newspapers and mailed to owners and occupants of adjacent properties when appropriate.

\* As of June 1996. Subject to change.

\*\* From time application deemed complete.

### For more information, call:

Environmental Management Section  
(310) 732-3675

## DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND POWER

In addition to being Lead Agency for their own public projects, which include development of utility facilities, water and power infrastructure, power system operating agreements, and water rights, DWP may also have Lead Agency responsibilities for private projects that involve rights of way, new water or power resources, or water rights.

As Lead Agency, DWP conducts public scoping meetings and consultation with public agencies as necessary. Projects are approved by the Board of Water and Power Commissioners and are subject to review and possible secondary approval or denial by the City Council.

As a Responsible Agency for private projects, DWP reviews and comments on CEQA documents to address water and electric service requirements, conservation measures, and impacts to City infrastructure.

After CEQA review is complete, a request for water or power service can be made at the DWP Service Planning Office (power service) and at the DWP Branch Office (water service) that serves the project site. Requests for water services can also be made at the downtown office. For large projects (greater than 3-inch water service), the required water flow is set by Building and Safety (B & S) in conjunction with the Fire Department. Electrical service is decided by DWP, B & S, and the applicant.

Service installation is a four step process:

- DWP provides estimate for installation.
- Applicant pays for service.
- Parties execute location agreement and easement, if required.
- DWP designs and installs service.

### Key Private Projects

- Water rights
- Water or Power Rights of Way
- New water or power resources

### CEQA Processing Fees\*

Exemption	None
Negative Declaration	None
EIR	None

### General Processing Time\*\*

Exemption	1 day
Negative Declaration	6 - 9 months
EIR	9 - 24 months

### Public Notices

Notices are placed in local newspapers, and mailed to owners and occupants of adjacent properties when appropriate.

\* As of June 1996. Subject to change.

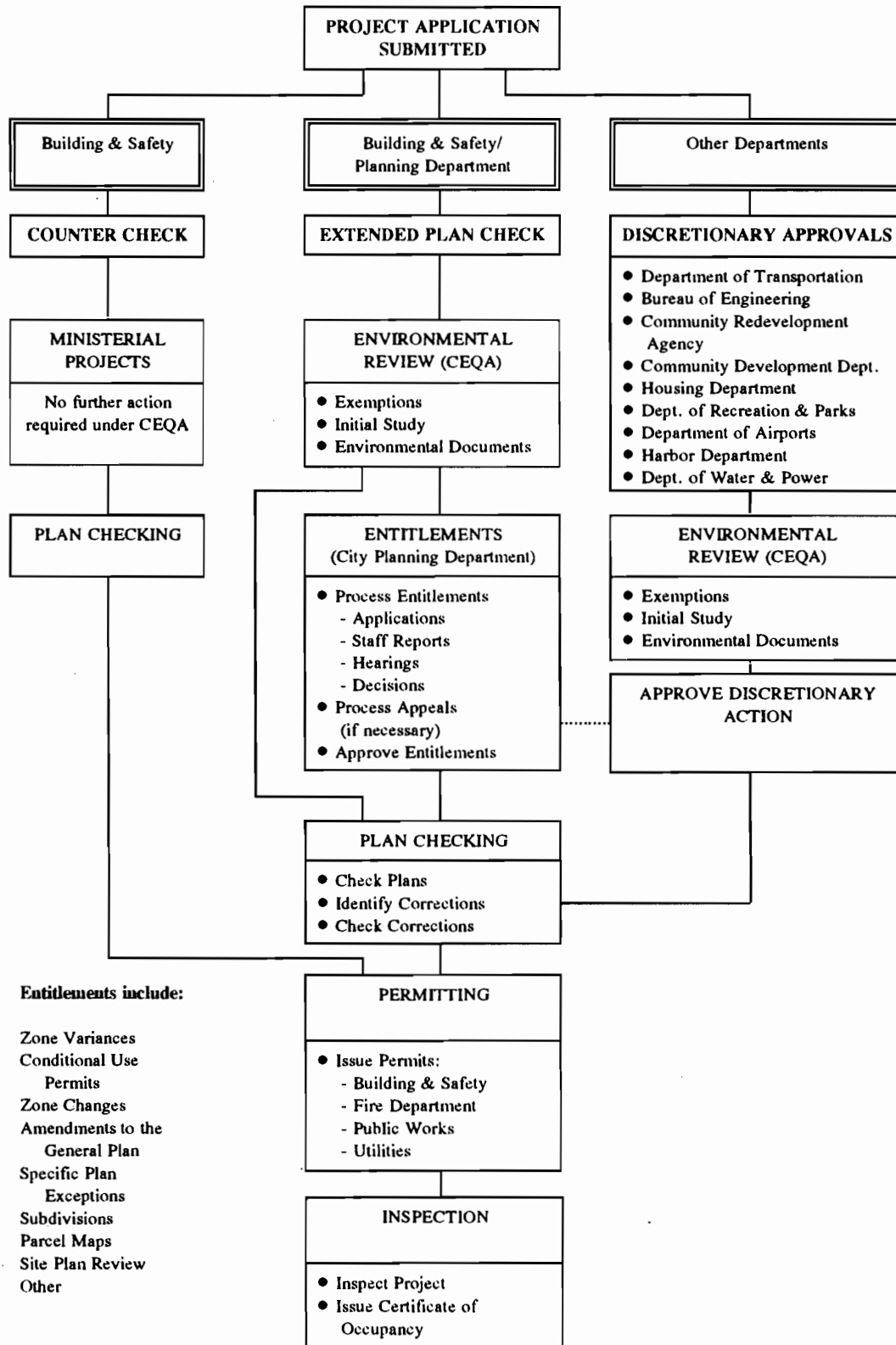
\*\* From time application deemed complete.

### For more information, call:

Environmental Assessments - Water  
(213) 367-0822  
Environmental Assessments - Power  
(213) 367-0270



THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



Entitlements include:

- Zone Variances
- Conditional Use Permits
- Zone Changes
- Amendments to the General Plan
- Specific Plan Exceptions
- Subdivisions
- Parcel Maps
- Site Plan Review
- Other

The development process may include some or all of the following:

- **entitlements** from the Planning Department;
- **permits** from the City of Los Angeles (issued by Building & Safety, Fire Department, Department of Public Works, Department of Water and Power);
- **sign-off** from Cultural Heritage Commission or Department of Transportation; and/or
- **approvals** from Community Development Department, LA Housing Department, Community Redevelopment Agency, Harbor Department, Department of Airports, and others.

Some non-city agencies also regulate the development and operation of certain projects.

### WHAT ARE THE BASIC STEPS OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS?

**1** To begin the development process, an application and preliminary plans are usually needed. Information such as the project description, project objective, parcel location, and name and contact information of the owner, architects, contractors, engineers, etc., may be required, along with additional materials.

**2** The application is evaluated to ensure that the project meets required conditions, including compliance with CEQA. Any required environmental documents are prepared and completed prior to approval of the project or issuance of a permit. It is important to remember that the CEQA review must be done as early as feasible in the process. No discretionary project may be finally acted on without a completed CEQA clearance.

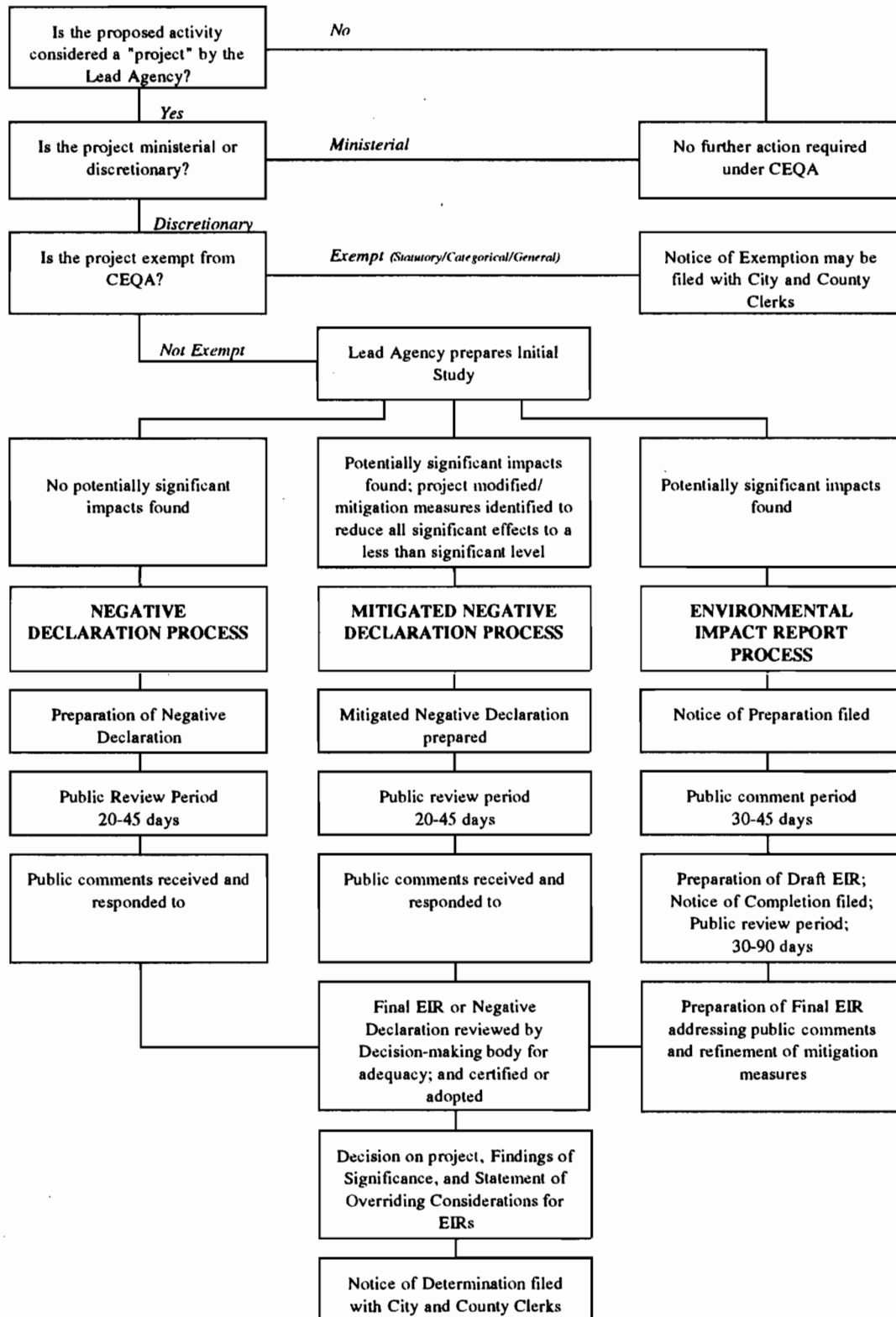
**3** Generally, for an entitlement granted by the City Planning Department, after appropriate notice, a public hearing is held so that the applicant and members of the public can express opinions on all aspects of a proposed development. After closing the public hearing, a decision is made and a comprehensive report prepared. Conditions may be required as a part of the approval. Decisions, such as Zoning Variances, Subdivisions, Parcel Maps, Site Plan Review, and some Conditional Use Permits, can be appealed. (See Table Box, Page 2.) After a public hearing on the appeal, a final decision is rendered.

**4** Discretionary approvals from other City departments, such as Housing Department or Community Development Department, are usually evaluated in terms of the goals and requirements of the department. Project approval or funding authorizations are considered by the Board of Commissioners and/or City Council.

**5** Plan checking and permitting can be accomplished over the counter (for simple permits) or through extended plan check. The review of project plans may include input from more than one department. For example, some B permits issued by the Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering require additional review from the Bureau of Street Lighting and the Department of Transportation. Likewise, some building plans submitted to the Department of Building and Safety are transmitted to the Fire Department for a concurrent evaluation.

**6** Typically, in the permit process, the applicant is notified of deficiencies and errors in the plans. Then, after the corrections are made, the plans may be resubmitted. Once the plans are correct, the permits can be issued. Work must satisfactorily pass all inspections before a Certificate of Occupancy is issued.

**GENERAL CEQA PROCESS**



## 1 ESTABLISH LEAD AGENCY

The Lead Agency is the public agency that has the primary responsibility for carrying out or approving a project. City departments fulfill the Lead Agency responsibilities of the City by acting as the Lead City Agency for their own public projects, as well as for private projects in an area under their jurisdiction for which they will act first on the project and/or have the greatest responsibility for supervising or approving a project. (Example: When the City Planning Department is the Lead Agency for projects requiring both a land use entitlement and a building permit.)

When the City of Los Angeles is the Lead Agency, Participating City Agencies are the departments, bureaus, divisions, offices, or agencies that assist the Lead City Agency with the review of a particular issue or projects. Thus, as a Participating City Agency, the Department of Transportation often assists a Lead City Agency with the evaluation of traffic impacts.

A Responsible Agency is a public agency that has discretionary approval over a project, but is not the Lead Agency. This includes those that issue permits and approvals for only a portion of a project (i.e., Army Core of Engineers).

There is generally only one Lead Agency; however, there can be many Responsible Agencies. The Lead Agency prepares the environmental documents in consultation with the responsible agencies who usually use the same environmental documents when considering project approval.

## 2 DETERMINE IF THERE IS DISCRETIONARY AUTHORITY

A project that requires compliance with applicable statutes, ordinances, and regulations, but does not require personal discretion or judgement is considered a ministerial project. This type of project is automatically approved if it meets minimum

standard requirements; it is not subject to the requirements of CEQA. An example is acquiring a business license.

An activity that allows for judgment and imposition of conditions for approval by the City Council or other decision-making body is a discretionary project. An example of a discretionary project is a Conditional Use Permit or a Zone Change.

## 3 IS THE PROJECT EXEMPT?

CEQA applies only to those projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it

### THE OBJECTIVES OF CEQA

- Inform governmental decision-makers and the public about the potential significant environmental effects of proposed activities;
- Identify the ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced;
- Prevent significant, avoidable damage to the environment by identifying changes in projects through the use of alternatives or mitigation measures when the governmental agency finds the changes to be feasible;
- Document the reasons used by decision-makers, when approving a project, to determine that the benefits of a proposed project outweigh the significant, unavoidable, adverse environmental effects in cases where an environmental impact report has been certified;
- Foster coordination between public agencies; and
- Enhance public participation.

can be determined with reasonable certainty that a project will not have a significant effect on the environment, it is not subject to CEQA and a General Exemption is granted.

Other reasons for project exemption from the requirements of CEQA, include: (1) the California Legislature has made the determination that a specific type of project should be exempt from CEQA, which is called a Statutory Exemption; or, (2) the Secretary for Resources finds that an activity falling under a particular category of projects, determined to have no significant environmental impacts, is exempt from CEQA, which is called a Categorical Exemption. There may be unusual circumstances, such as a particularly sensitive environment, when a Categorical Exemption may not be applicable.

After it is determined that a project is exempt from CEQA, the Lead Agency may file a Notice of Exemption (NOE) with the City Clerk and County Clerk, at which time a 35-day Statute of Limitations begins. If the Notice of Exemption is not filed with the City Clerk and County Clerk, there is a 180-day Statute of Limitations. The Statute of Limitation establishes the time frame during which the decision to exempt a project can be challenged in a court of law.

## 4 PREPARE AN INITIAL STUDY

The Initial Study is a preliminary analysis of a project's potential environmental effects. It determines what type of environmental document is needed: a Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The Initial Study also facilitates early environmental assessment, provide documentation in support of a Negative Declaration, and focus the scope of an EIR. If it is readily apparent that a proposed project will have a significant effect on the environment, the Lead Agency may choose not to prepare an Initial Study, and instead would begin the EIR process.

## 5a USING THE NEGATIVE DECLARATION

If it has been determined from the Initial Study that a project will not have a significant effect on the environment, then the City can prepare a Negative Declaration. The reasons why the project will not have any significant environmental impacts and does not require the preparation of an EIR are explained in the Negative Declaration.

When the Lead Agency determines that significant effects may result and the project can be modified or mitigation measures proposed to reduce all significant effects to a less than significant level, the Lead Agency may choose to prepare a Mitigated Negative Declaration instead of an EIR. In addition to the information in a Negative Declaration, a Mitigated Negative Declaration includes a list of mitigation measures required for the project.

Once the Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration is prepared, a public notice that the Lead Agency proposes to adopt a Negative Declaration must be given to all those who request such notification. At least one of the following must also be used: (1) publication at least one time in a newspaper of general circulation in the area affected by the proposed project; (2) posting the notice on and off the site in the area where the project will be located; or (3) direct mailing to owners and occupants of property contiguous to the project.

Responsible Agencies, the public, and other public agencies have an opportunity to review the document and comment. The review period lasts a minimum of 20 days. It is 30 days long if a public notice must be submitted to the State Clearinghouse because the project is of statewide, regional, or areawide significance. The Lead Agency must respond to all comments on environmental issues received during the public review period.

## 5b ADOPTING THE NEGATIVE DECLARATION

The decision-making body considers the public comments and the Lead Agency responses along with the adequacy of the document prior to adoption of the Negative Declaration. The adequacy of the Negative Declaration is determined based on the finding that there is no substantial evidence presented in the Initial Study or noted in the public comments that the project will have a significant effect on the environment.

After adoption of the Negative Declaration, the public agency can consider approval of the project and issuance of any permits, entitlements, etc., if appropriate.

ment. The EIR also discusses feasible mitigation measures and alternatives to the proposed project.

At the beginning of the EIR process, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published and filed with the City Clerk and County Clerk and, sometimes, the State Clearinghouse. The NOP gives Responsible Agencies, Federal Agencies (if applicable) and the public the opportunity to help determine the content of an EIR. This is referred to as the scoping process. After the NOP has been filed, a 30-day (minimum) comment period commences. All comments that are received by the Lead Agency during this time are used to determine what environmental issues will be addressed in the Draft EIR.

## 5c NOTICE OF DETERMINATION FOR A NEGATIVE DECLARATION

After approval of a project for which a Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration has been adopted, a Notice of Determination (NOD) shall be filed with the City Clerk and County Clerk. This notice informs the public that a proposed project has complied with CEQA and project approval was granted. The filing of the NOD begins the Statute of Limitations period. A person may contest in a court of law the adequacy of an environmental document up to 30 days after the NOD is filed and posted. Once the Statute of Limitations expires, a person loses the right to challenge the environmental document.

## 6a PREPARING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (EIR)

The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is used to disclose to the public and decision-makers the potentially significant effects that a proposed project may have on the environ-

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

All or some of these opportunities may exist for any given project:

- Read published advertisements in local newspapers regarding the availability of environmental documents and/or hearings/meetings where proposed project will be considered
- Participate in public scoping meetings
- Respond to Notice of Preparation of an EIR
- Submit written comments on EIRs and Negative Declarations
- Present oral or written comments at Public Hearings
- Attend Department, Board, Commission, Council Committee, or City Council meetings

The Lead Agency then prepares a Draft EIR (DEIR) including a description of the proposed project and its environmental setting, specific environmental impacts during all phases of the project, alternatives to the project, proposed mitigation measures, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative effects.

Once the DEIR is completed, a Notice of Completion (NOC) is filed with the State Clearinghouse in the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR). After the NOC is filed, a 30-day (minimum) public comment period on the draft EIR commences. When a project has regional impacts, the public comment period is a minimum of 45 days.

During the review period, Responsible Agencies and other interested parties may provide comments on the DEIR. There may also be a public hearing to discuss the document and solicit public comments.

Once the public comment period on the Draft EIR closes, the Lead Agency must consider and respond in writing to the comments received on environmental issues, as it prepares the Final EIR. The contents of a Final EIR include: the revised Draft EIR; comments on the Draft EIR; and responses from the Lead Agency.

**6b** **CERTIFYING THE EIR**  
Certification of the Environmental Impact Report is intended to ensure that the Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA Statutes and Guidelines and the City of Los Angeles CEQA Guidelines; that all impacts have been fully disclosed with feasible mitigation measures proposed, as well as disclosure of those impacts that cannot be mitigated to less than significant levels; that the Final EIR is being presented to the Lead Agency Board or Commission and/or City Council for review and consideration prior to approving the proposed project; and that the Final EIR reflects the independent judgment of the Lead Agency.

## **6c** **APPROVING THE PROJECT AFTER CERTIFICATION**

Although an Environmental Impact Report may be certified, the Lead Agency may disapprove a proposed project at its own discretion. However, the decision-making body cannot approve or carry out a project for which an EIR has been completed which identifies one or more significant environmental effects, unless it certifies the EIR and makes one or more findings for each of those significant effects, accompanied by an explanation for the finding. Possible findings for each significant environmental effect include: (1) changes or alternatives have been included which substantially lessen the environmental effect; (2) such changes or alternatives are within the jurisdiction of another public agency and have been or can and should be adopted; or (3) specific economic, social, or other considerations make the mitigation measures or project alternatives infeasible.

Project approval may include the adoption of a Statement of Overriding Considerations if significant effects remain. A Statement of Overriding Considerations states the specific reasons supporting the decision to approve the project even though significant, adverse effects may result.

After certification of the EIR and approval of the project, permits may be issued and entitlements granted. Just as after approval of a project for which a Negative Declaration is prepared, when an EIR is completed, a Notice of Determination (NOD) is filed with the City and County Clerks upon approval of the project. A 30-day Statute of Limitations for challenging the EIR in a court of law begins with the filing of the NOD.

## GLOSSARY

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**Alternatives** - A range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain the project's objectives but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. The comparative merits of the alternatives are evaluated in an EIR or EIS.

**Applicant** - A person who proposes to carry out a project and needs a lease, permit, license, certificate, or other entitlement for use, or who is requesting financial assistance from one or more public agencies to carry out a project.

**Approval** - The action by a decision-making body which commits the City to a definite course of action with regard to a project intended to be carried out by any person.

**California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)** - Statute enacted by the California legislature described in this guide and contained in the California Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et seq.

**Categorical Exemption** - An exemption from the requirements of CEQA based on a finding by the Secretary for Resources and the Los Angeles City Council that certain types of projects do not have a significant effect on the environment.

**Decision-Making Body** - A group or individual having project approval authority.

**Discretionary Project** - An activity defined as a project which requires the exercise of judgment, deliberation, or a decision on the part of the public agency or body in the process of approving or disapproving a particular activity, as distinguished from activities where the public agency or body merely has to determine whether there has been compliance with applicable statutes, ordinances, or regulations.

**Entitlement** - Used to describe discretionary land use approval granted by the Planning Department. Includes Zone Variances, Conditional Use Permits, General Plan Amendments, Specific Plan Exceptions, Subdivisions, Parcel Maps, and Site Plan Review.

**Environment** - Environment, for purposes of implementing CEQA, is the physical conditions which exist within the area which will be affected by a proposed project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance.

**Environmental Assessment Form (EAF)** - An environmental form submitted to the Environmental Review Section of the City Planning Department which provides the necessary information to determine the recommended environmental clearance for projects requiring any discretionary action.

**Environmental Documents** - Environmental documents are Initial Studies, Negative Declarations, draft and final EIRs, Notices of Preparation and General Exemptions, Notices of Completion, Notices of Determination, and Notices of Exemption.

**Environmental Impact Report (EIR)** - An Environmental Impact Report is a concise statement setting forth the environmental effects and considerations pertaining to a project as specified in Section 21100 of the California Environmental Quality Act.

**Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** - An Environmental Impact Statement may be required pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) if federal agencies or funding is involved. Like an EIR, an EIS describes the environmental impacts of a proposed project and its alternatives.



**Environmental Staff Advisory Committee (ESAC)** - The ESAC is a committee of the Planning Department which acts in an advisory capacity to the staff and decision-maker. The ESAC reviews the Initial Study prepared by the staff and recommends the type of environmental clearance proposed for certification.

**Feasible** - Feasible means capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, social, and technological factors.

**General Exemption** - An exemption from the requirements of CEQA is granted if it can be seen with reasonable certainty that the project in question could not possibly have a significant effect on the environment.

**Guidelines** - Provide agencies with criteria and procedures for the evaluation of projects and the preparation of environmental documents. The State Guidelines are contained in Title 14, Division 6 of the California Administrative Code. The Los Angeles City CEQA Guidelines are adopted by ordinance of the City Council.

**Initial Study** - A comprehensive analysis of those aspects of the environment which could potentially affect a project or be affected by a project conducted to determine whether a project may have a significant effect on the environment.

**Lead Agency** - The public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project. The Lead Agency will prepare the environmental documents for the project either directly or by contract.

**Lead City Agency** - A Lead City Agency is the City department, bureau, division, section, office or agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out a project which is subject to the provisions of CEQA, or has the principal responsibility for processing the application for a lease, permit, license, or other entitlement for use for a project which is subject to the provisions of CEQA. If more than one City Agency meets the Lead City

Agency criteria, the Lead City Agency shall be the City Agency that normally acts first on such projects.

**Ministerial Project** - Activities undertaken by public agencies pursuant to a statute, ordinance, or regulation that sets forth the conditions upon which the undertaking must or must not be granted. A ministerial decision involves only the use of fixed standards or objective measurements without personal judgment.

**Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND)** - When significant impacts may occur as a result of the implementation of a project, but mitigation and/or project modification reduce impacts to a less than significant level, then a Mitigated Negative Declaration is issued with discussion and conditions attached.

**Mitigation** - Mitigation includes avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action; minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation; rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the impacted environment; reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; or compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

**National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** - The National Environmental Policy Act is the federal law requiring an environmental assessment for federal actions that involve impacts on the environment. NEPA is set forth in 42 U.S.C.A. 4321 et seq.

**Negative Declaration (ND)** - A statement by the Lead Agency briefly setting forth the reasons why the project, although not otherwise exempt, will not have a significant effect on the environment and therefore does not require the preparation of an EIR. **Notice of Completion (NOC)** - A brief notice filed with the State Clearinghouse in the Governor's Office of Planning and Research by a Lead Agency as soon as it has completed a draft EIR and is prepared to send out copies for review.

**Notice of Determination (NOD)** - A public notice filed by the Lead City Agency after a project subject to the provisions of CEQA and involving a Negative Declaration or an EIR has been approved.

**Notice of Exemption (NOE)** - A public notice which may be filed with the City and County Clerk by a Lead City Agency after the decision-making body has approved a project and has determined that it is a ministerial, categorically exempt, or emergency project, or is otherwise exempted pursuant to the provisions of Section 21080 (b) of the California Public Resources Code.

**Notice of Preparation (NOP)** - A brief notice sent by a Lead City Agency to notify Responsible Agencies that the Lead City Agency plans to prepare an EIR for a project.

**Office of Planning and Research (OPR)** - Assists in the understanding and implementation of CEQA by (1) preparing and updating the State CEQA Guidelines; (2) evaluating Categorical Exemptions; (3) distributing documents to state agencies through the State Clearinghouse; (4) coordinating between other public agencies; and (5) preparing and distributing publications related to the understanding and use of CEQA.

**Participating City Agency** - A City department, bureau, division, section, office, officer or agency which is required by Charter or action of the City Council to review a particular class of projects and make comments or recommendations to the Lead City Agency.

**Responsible Agency** - A public agency, such as a city or county, which proposes to carry out or has approval power over a project, but is not the Lead Agency for the project.

**Significant Effect** - A substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the activity including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance.

**State Clearinghouse** - In the Governor's Office of Planning and Research. Responsible for distributing environmental documents to state agencies, departments, boards, and commissions for review and comment. Coordinates the responses to ensure accurate and consistent responses from the state.

**Statement of Overriding Considerations** - A statement identifying public objectives that, in the opinion of the decision-making body, warrant approval of a project notwithstanding its significant adverse impact(s) on the environment.

**Statutory Exemption** - Exemption from the requirements of CEQA based on the determination by the California Legislature that a specific type of project should be exempt from CEQA.