III. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires a description of the environmental context for the proposed Project in order to adequately investigate and discuss the significant effects of the Project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15125). The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with a generalized overview of the regional and local setting in which the proposed Project site is located, and to introduce the baseline physical conditions by which the District and the College determine whether an impact is significant. Detailed setting descriptions are provided within Section V., Environmental Impact Analysis, of the EIR which is presented by environmental topic.

A. SETTING

1. Location and Regional Context

The Project site is composed of the existing College campus and the adjacent property at 2115 S. Grand Avenue, presently utilized as a commercial use (Apffel’s Coffee Company). The immediately surrounding properties are mostly commercial, industrial and public service in nature, with residential areas within a few blocks. The Project is situated just southeast of the intersection of the Santa Monica Freeway (I-10) and the Harbor Freeway (I-110). To the north of the Project site is downtown Los Angeles, including Staples Center and the LA Convention Center; to the east and south of the Project site is the Southeast Los Angeles neighborhood; the South Central neighborhood is to the west, with Exposition Park and University of Southern California’s University Park Campus to the southwest.

Though located within the City of Los Angeles (“the City”), the College is part of the Los Angeles Community College District service area. Despite the independent sovereignty of the District, the Project must comply with applicable building and zoning ordinances of the City, unless the governing board of the District votes to expressly exempt the Project. The City governs land use policy and development standards through the General Plan of the City of Los Angeles and the Planning and Zoning Chapter of the City of Los Angeles Municipal Code.

At the regional level, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), and the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) have jurisdiction over planning and land use issues. SCAG’s Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide (RCPG) contains a general overview of federal, state, and regional plans applicable to the southern California region and serves as a comprehensive planning guide for future regional growth. The primary goals of the RCPG are to improve the standard of living, enhance the quality of life, and promote social equity. The Metropolitan
III. Environmental Setting

Transportation Authority administers the state-mandated Congestion Management Plan (CMP), designed to address the community and regional impact of urban congestion. The primary goal of the CMP is to enhance economic vitality and quality of life by reducing traffic congestion. SCAQMD’s Air Quality Management Plan presents strategies for achieving the air quality planning goals set forth in the Federal and California Clean Air Acts.

2. Air Quality

The Project site is located within the 6,600 square mile South Coast Air Basin (Basin). SCAQMD is required, pursuant to the Clean Air Act, to reduce emissions of criteria pollutants for which the Basin is in non-attainment, which currently includes ozone, CO, and PM_{10}. SCAQMD’s Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) lists pollution control strategies directed at reducing emissions and achieving ambient air quality standards. These strategies are developed, in part, based on regional and local population, housing, and employment projections prepared by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) in cooperation with local jurisdictions within Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, Riverside, San Bernardino and Imperial Counties. The Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide prepared by SCAG includes Growth Management and Regional Mobility chapters that form the basis for the land use and transportation control portions of the AQMP and are utilized in the preparation of the air quality forecasts and consistency analysis included in the AQMP.

3. Cultural Resources

The College encompasses the site of the former Los Angeles Polytechnic High School (“Poly High”), begun in 1897 as a commercial branch of the only high school in Los Angeles at the time, Los Angeles High School. By the 1950s, the growing commercialization of the area led to the decision to close the high school and the campus became the College. Over the past forty years the College has expanded southward to 23rd Street and various buildings from the Poly High were replaced by newer, larger facilities. Remaining Campus buildings that are over 45 years of age include the buildings at 1948 and 2208 South Grand. Both appear ineligible for federal, state, or local designation due to a lack of sufficient historical and/or architectural importance necessary to merit recognition as a historical resource as defined by CEQA. In addition, the Project site encompasses a commercial property associated with Apfel’s Coffee Company, a highly recognized local family business operating at this site for over fifty years. Currently, no portion of the Project site is listed on either the National Register of Historic Places or the California Register of Historical Resources, nor is it a designated City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument. The City has been committed to on-going survey and inventory work of its historic resources; however, the subject property has not been previously identified or surveyed as part of this past work effort.
4. Noise

The noise environment in the Project area is dominated by traffic noise from nearby roadways and the Blue Line Light Rail Transit line. The heaviest traveled roadways in the vicinity of the Project site include Washington Boulevard, Grand Avenue, and Flower Street, which border the Project site to the north, east, and west, respectively. Secondary noise in the area persists from general commercial/industrial-related activities (e.g., delivery and solid waste collection trucks). Ambient noise levels in the Project area are typical of noise levels experienced within urbanized areas.

5. Transportation and Circulation

The Project site is centrally located in the Los Angeles region, near the intersection of the Santa Monica Freeway (I-10) and the Harbor Freeway (I-110). The Project site is bounded by Washington Boulevard on the north, Flower Street on the west, 23rd Street on the south, and Grand Avenue and Olive Street on the east. Other major arterials that serve the Project area include Figueroa Street, one block west of Flower Street, and Adams Boulevard, one block south of 23rd Street. Washington Boulevard features the MTA Blue Line train along the median with a stop just west of the intersection with Grand Avenue. In addition, the Project area is served by bus lines operated by the MTA, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation, Torrance Transit, Foothill Transit, and Gardena Municipal Bus Lines.

B. RELATED PROJECTS

CEQA requires that Environmental Impact Reports analyze “cumulative impacts”, defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15355 as “two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts.” In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 indicates that the analysis of cumulative impacts need not be as in-depth as what is performed relative to the proposed Project, but instead is to “be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness.”

Cumulative impacts are anticipated impacts of the Project along with reasonably foreseeable growth. According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(b)(1), reasonably foreseeable growth may be based on: 10

• A list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts; and/or

10 Clarification based on Communities for a Better Environment v. California Resources Agency (2002)
• A summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document, or in a prior environmental planning document which has been adopted or certified, which described or evaluated regional or area-wide conditions contributing to the cumulative impact.

Cumulative study areas are defined based on an analysis of the geographical scope relevant to each particular environmental issue. Therefore, the cumulative study area, and related projects contained within, for each individual environmental impact issue may vary. For example, a cumulative visual impact generally could only affect the area within the view of the Project site, while a cumulative air quality impact could affect the entire South Coast Air Basin. The specific boundaries, and the related projects within those boundaries, for the cumulative study area of each environmental issue, are identified in the applicable environmental issue section in Section V., Environmental Impact Analysis, of this Draft EIR.