

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Geographic Setting and Access

The WLAC campus is located in the Los Angeles Metropolitan area and is influenced by the demands and character of the region. The WLAC campus has existed at the current location since its opening in 1969 and currently encompasses approximately 72 acres of built and open space land uses. Existing campus development includes administrative offices, library, minimal food facilities, maintenance facilities, and surface parking. Existing open space includes the track and athletic fields and over 32 acres of unutilized internal space.

West Los Angeles College is located in west Los Angeles County in a predominantly developed, urbanized setting. Surrounding and nearby urbanized cities include the Cities of Culver City, Inglewood and Los Angeles. While the campus is in a predominantly urbanized setting, it is located at the base of the Baldwin Hills, which is a large open space area. It is situated at the eastern edge of development, with Baldwin Hills located immediately to the east. The campus is located not far from both downtown Los Angeles to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west. The Baldwin Hills represent the largest remaining open space in the Los Angeles Basin and are located immediately east of the densely populated City of Culver City.

Regional access to the site is provided by nearby freeways consisting of the Santa Monica (I-10) Freeway, approximately one and three-quarter miles to the north; the San Diego (Route 405) Freeway, located about one and one-quarter miles to the west; and the Marina (State Hwy 90) Freeway. The Project site is a three-quarter miles west of La Cienega Boulevard, a major Los Angeles thoroughfare, which extends from the Hollywood Hills north of the Project site to the Century (I-105) Freeway south of the site. Slauson Avenue and Sepulveda, Washington Culver, and Jefferson Boulevards provide additional regional access in the vicinity. Local circulation is provided by Overland Avenue and Freshman, Stocker, and Sophomore Streets. The Master Plan illustrates three alternative routes for providing a second access road to the campus. These alternatives would connect to either Jefferson or La Cienega Boulevard. The campus is approximately three and one-half miles north of the Los Angeles International Airport. There is no rail service in the project vicinity; however, the Fox Hills Transit Center is located approximately one mile south of the College. Bus service to the WLAC campus is served directly and indirectly via transfer by a number of Culver City Bus and Los Angeles County MTA bus lines. Culver City Bus serves the Westside communities of Century City, Culver City, Mar Vista, Marina Del Rey, Palms, Rancho Park, Venice, West Los Angeles, Westchester, and Westwood. There are 6 routes with 4 radiating from the Fox Hills Mall Transit Center. The system also connects with the MTA Green Line to the south, to UCLA to the north, from Fairfax Ave. to the east, to Venice Beach to the west. Culver City Buses also interconnect with the MTA and Santa Monica's Big Blue & Torrance Transit. Culver City Bus operates 7 days a week from approximately 5:30am to 11:30pm. The WLAC campus is directly served by Line 3, which runs from Century City in the north to Fox Hills Mall in the south, and by Line 4, which runs between Washington Boulevard and Fairfax Avenue to West Los Angeles College and Fox Hills Mall. According to Culver City Bus authority approximately 600 boarding and alighting occur at the WLAC stop on a weekday.

Surrounding Development and Land Use

The nearby urban environment contains a mix of uses including single- and multi-family residential units, commercial and industrial areas. The WLAC campus is bordered by single-family residences (south of Stocker Street) and by multi-family residential developments (west of Freshman Drive) in Culver City. The single-family, single-story residential structures abut an electricity power-line easement paralleling Stocker Street. Two- and three-story structures make up several multi-family residential developments located between Freshman Drive and Jefferson Boulevard. The northern and eastern sides of the campus are backed by the Inglewood Oil Fields in the Baldwin Hills (**Figure IV-1**).

Figure IV-1 Surrounding Land Use

The Baldwin Hills, located directly east of the campus, encompass approximately 450 acres of open space including dramatic ridgelines and steep canyons. The Baldwin Hills run north to south ascending to just over 500 feet above the coastal plain. The Baldwin Hills include the Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area, the Ladera Ball Fields, the Vista Pacifica Scenic Site, Culver City Park and Norman O. Houston Park.

The Hills also support unique indigenous California vegetation. The major natural vegetation community present in the Hills is coastal scrub (Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, 2001). They also contain grassland and riparian habitat. However, the natural vegetation of the Hills adjacent to the campus has been degraded over the years to varying degrees as a result of urbanization, fragmentation (from roads, trails, buildings and invasive non-native landscaping (Baldwin Hills Conservancy, 2002). In addition to the natural character of the Baldwin Hills, they have been disturbed by decades of petroleum extraction related activities. The slopes and ridges that form the easterly and northerly backdrops to the campus are distinguished by the presence of active oil well production pads, clusters of petroleum storage tanks, exposed oil transmission pipelines, and crudely cut dirt access roads. The oil field properties abut the eastern side of Sophomore Drive and are closed off to public access by barbed-wire-topped chain-link fencing for security purposes.

Approximately one-half mile west of the Campus, is the Ballona Creek. Ballona Creek generally trends in northeast-southwest direction within the Cities of Culver City and Los Angeles. It is predominantly concrete lined, but contains some natural open area adjacent to the Creek, such as the Ballona Creek wetlands located approximately four miles downstream of the campus. The City of Culver City is currently developing plans to enhance the visual quality of the Creek, which may include enhancements in the Creek in the vicinity of the project.

Land uses in Culver City in the vicinity of the project are a mixture of commercial, industrial and residential uses. Business ranging from private storage to commercial office buildings, mini-malls and several neighborhood businesses and restaurants exist in the area. There are several major retail outlets and food markets such as Target and Ralphs nearby.

Adjacent residential development includes the three multi-family complexes located between the College and Jefferson Boulevard. These are the Raintree Condominiums, Tara Hill Condominiums, and the Lakeside village residential area. South of the College in the vicinity of Stocker Street and Overland Avenue, are a mixture of two-family and single-family homes.

Other land uses in the vicinity include, Holy Cross Cemetery, L. Rincon Elementary School, Culver City High School and Middle School, and Culver City Park.

Local Services and Utilities

Fire and paramedic services for the College are provided by the County of Los Angeles Fire Department Fire Department, primarily from Station 58, located at 5757 South Fairfax Avenue.

Police protection services for the College are provided by the Community College Bureau of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The Department maintains a Sheriff Substation on campus and utilizes a combination of Deputy Sheriffs and armed Sheriff's Security Officers to provide law enforcement and security services.

The Los Angeles Unified School District and Culver City Unified School District provide public education for grades K-12 in the local vicinity. WLAC is within the Los Angeles Community College District, the largest community college district in California. WLAC has seven instructional divisions, which provide a wide range of high quality transfer and occupational classes. The divisions are Allied Health Aviation and Travel; Behavioral and Social Sciences; Business; Humanities and Fine Arts; Language Arts; Library Learning Resource Center; Math; Sciences; and Physical Education and Health.

The nearest public library is the Culver City Julian Dixon Library, located at 4975 Overland Avenue. Part of the County of Los Angeles Public Library, the Culver City Julian Dixon Library has adult and children's materials in English with collections in Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese.

The WLAC sewer is currently served by a 10-inch main line running through the campus. Sewage from the campus enters the North Outfall Sewer. The City of Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering maintains the North Outfall Sewer, which is part of a larger system that collects sewage from many surrounding communities and carries the sewage to the Hyperion Treatment Plant located in Playa Del Rey within the City of Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works maintains the existing main storm drain system servicing the WLAC. The campus contains private drainage systems, which connect to the County system.

The Southern California Water Company, a subsidiary of the American States Water Company, currently provides water service to WLAC. Water is delivered through a water main that runs north-south along Freshman Drive.

Consolidated Disposal Service is a private waste hauler who collects solid waste generated at the campus. Waste is collected 5 days per week Monday through Friday. Consolidated currently delivers the waste to the Chiquita Canyon Sanitary Landfill located in Valencia in the County of Los Angeles.

Southern California Edison provides electrical service to WLAC. The electrical service lines are underground within the campus and major electrical lines cross the site to the east and west of the campus. The College electrical system is connected by means of two feeder lines from the service entry point to a vault on Sophomore Drive. One feeder line meets the College's current electrical needs. A second feeder was installed to accommodate future projected expansion of the campus.

Land Use Planning Setting

The West Los Angeles College campus is located in an unincorporated portion of Los Angeles County. In general, as a "superior agency," educational facilities community colleges and state universities are exempt from local land use regulations. However, private colleges, universities and other private uses on the site would require a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) approved by the County. The County has approved one CUP for a private applicant using the West Los Angeles College property for a telecommunications site.

CUPs are approved if the proposed uses are consistent with the County's General Plan for the area and meet applicable zoning requirements. The following discussion reports on the County land use regulations as they pertain to use of the campus. The West Los Angeles College campus area falls within two different County Zoning land use designations: R-1 (Single-family Residential) and A-2 (Agricultural Zoning classifications). The R-1 Zone covers the southwest portion of the site, near Overland Avenue. The remainder of the campus lies within the A-2 Agricultural zone.

The R-1 zoning classification does not allow private colleges or university facilities (Los Angeles County Planning and Zoning Code 22.20.100). A private college use within the R-1 zone would require rezoning of that portion of the site to an appropriate zoning designation compatible with surrounding zoning and consistent with the County General Plan. The zone change would require public hearings before the Regional Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

The A-2 zoning classification allows private colleges and universities subject to the approval of a CUP (Los Angeles County Planning and Zoning Code 22.24.150 Uses subject to permits). The development standards of the A-2 zone do not apply to a college or university use. The CUP process would set the appropriate development standards based upon an approved Facilities Master Plan. The CUP would require a hearing before the Regional Planning Commission.

The West Los Angeles College and portions of the Baldwin Hills also fall within the City of Culver City's "Sphere of Influence." The City "Sphere of Influence" is a Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) boundary and service area that a local governmental agency is expected to serve. Thus, the City covers the College and portions of the Baldwin Hills within its long range planning jurisdiction.

The City of Culver City General Plan designates the campus as open space with a school overlay. If annexed into the City of Culver City, an appropriate zoning designation consistent with the City's General Plan would be applied to the West Los Angeles College campus area. The appropriate zoning designation would allow private schools, colleges and universities subject to City land use permit approval. In the City of Culver City, private educational institutions would be required to obtain a CUP or a special land use permit (such as a Planned Unit Development – PUD) for project approvals. Under this permit process, development standards (such as building heights, site coverage, and other design conditions) would be approved based on an overall Facilities Master Plan.

The second access road alternatives each travel through Baldwin Hills Conservancy lands that have been planned for active and/or passive recreation as part of the Baldwin Hills Park Master Plan.

B. CUMULATIVE PROJECTS

In order to assess cumulative impacts as they relate to the West Los Angeles College Facilities Master Plan, a list of past, present and probable future projects ("Related Projects") was developed (**Table IV-1**). The cumulative analysis contained in each environmental issue section of Section V. Environmental Impact Analysis, is based upon this list of Related Projects, taking into consideration any projects that might cause related or compounded impacts (see **Figure IV-2**).

Table IV-1
Related Projects List

Map No.	Location	Size	Unit	Description
1	3101 Sawtelle Blvd.	206	du	Apartment
2	Culver/Overland/Venice Blvd	8,000	sf	Shopping Center Expansion
3	4095 Overland Avenue	27,237	sf	Senior Community/Recreation Center
4	9599 Jefferson Blvd	8,213	sf	Creative office and cyber cafe
5	10001 Venice Blvd	119	du	Apartment ¹
6	9300 Culver Blvd. Town Plaza	1,850	sf	Movie Theater
		4,600	sf	Cafe
		10,000	sf	Specialty Retail
7	9025 Washington Blvd	22,482	sf	New/used car dealership and automotive service
8	National Blvd & Robertson Blvd	2,300	sf	Fast-food restaurant w/drive through
9	8695 E. Washington Blvd	17,468	sf	Office
10	8787 Venice Blvd	45,712	sf	Office
11	2929 La Cienega Blvd	5	p	Quick lubrication vehicle shop (Lube n Tune)
12	5879 Washington Blvd	9,900	sf	Automotive service & repair facility
13	Jefferson Blvd & National Blvd	289,455	sf	Office and light industrial development
14	8509 Higuera/8490 Warner	148	st	Willows Community School (enrollment increase)
15	3553 La Brea Ave	16,928	sf	Save-on drugstore with drive-thru
16	3826 Grand View Blvd	25,656	sf	Mar Vista Postal Station ¹
17	12006 W. Venice Blvd	12,500	sf	Mar Vista Library ¹
18	4061 Grandview Blvd	70	du	Assisted living / Alzheimer's care facility
19	5139 Sepulveda Blvd	9,800	sf	Specialty retail
20	12700 Braddock Dr	134,557	sf	Warehouse
		1,357	sf	Office
		-58,323	sf	University of California laundry building
21	E/O Lincoln Blvd, S/O Jefferson Blvd	3,246	du	Playa Vista Phase 1 ² Condominium
		3,206,950	sf	Office/Studios
		35,000	sf	Retail
		120,000	sf	Community facilities
22	5927 Beethoven St	90,000	sf	Industrial / light manufacturing
23	5535 Westlawn Ave	310	du	Apartment ³
24	294 Fox Hills Dr	215,130	sf	Shopping center expansion (Fox Hills Mall)
25	6801 Sepulveda Blvd	2,996	sf	Retail
26	E/O Sepulveda Blvd, N/O Hughes Parkway	756,000	sf	Howard Hughes Center Office (est)
		600	rm	Hotel
27	5227 Knowlton Ave	187	du	Senior apartment
28	10100 Jefferson Blvd	241,872	sf	Industrial / Office

sf = square foot; rm = room; du = dwelling unit; sb = service bay

¹ Traffic Analysis for Proposed Apartment Development at 10001 Venice Boulevard, Crain & Associates, May 2000.

² Playa Vista Traffic Study, Kaku Associates.

³ DEIR, Avalon Del Rey Apartments Project, March 2000.

Figure IV-2 Related Projects