

Chapter II

Project Description

1. Introduction

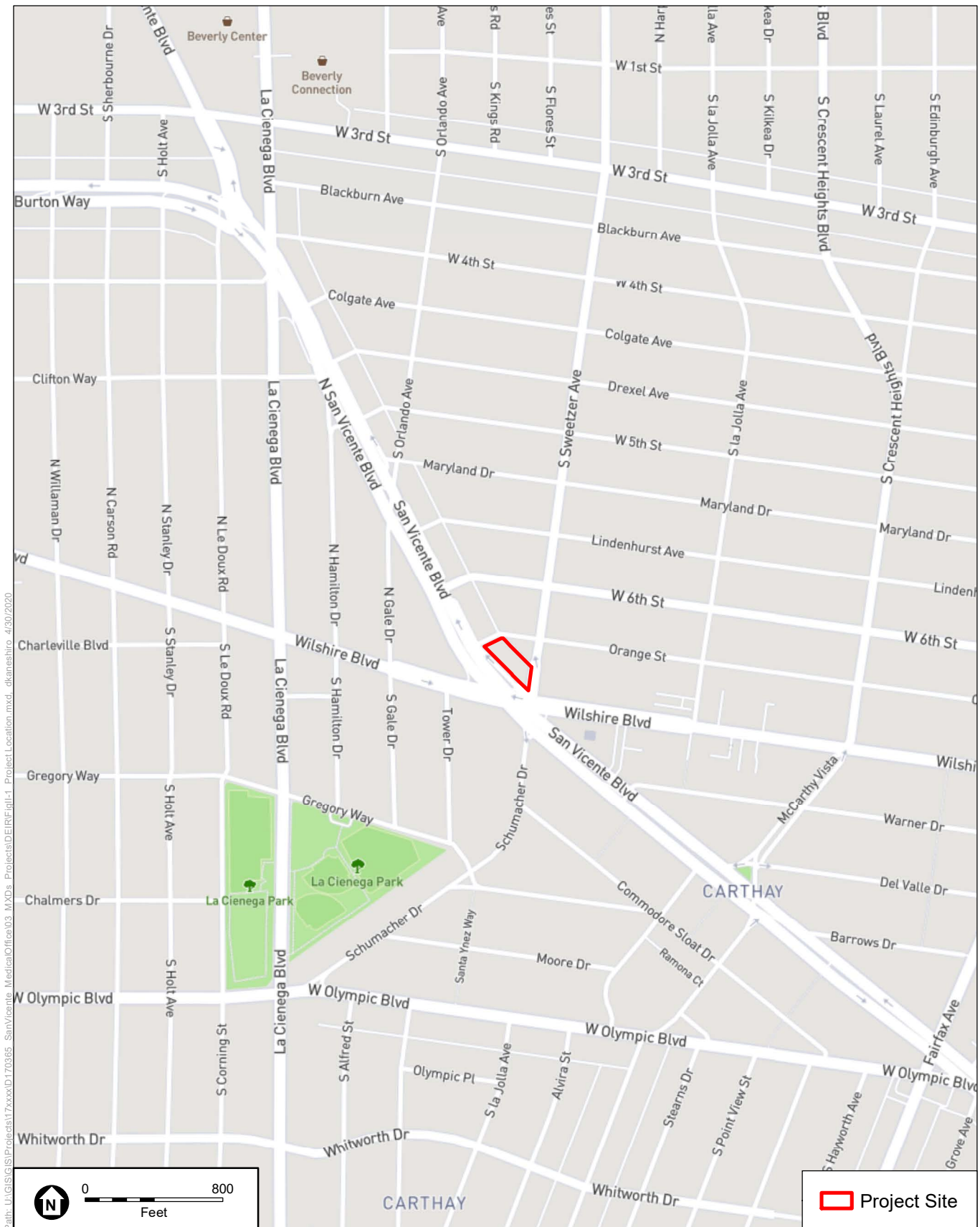
The 656 South San Vicente Medical Office Project (Project) would demolish a 5,738 square-foot, vacant educational building, and an 8,225 square-foot Big 5 Sporting Goods store and associated surface parking to develop a medical office and retail-commercial development on an approximately 0.76-acre (33,060 gross square feet, 32,290 net square feet) site located at 650–676 South San Vicente Boulevard (Project Site). The Project Site is located at the northeast corner of Wilshire Boulevard and South San Vicente Boulevard, in an urbanized area adjacent to commercial, office, residential, and medical related uses.

The Project would include up to 145,305 square feet of floor area, comprised of 140,305 square feet of medical office space and 5,000 square feet of ground floor retail-commercial space, of which up to 4,000 square feet may be a restaurant and 1,000 square feet may be other commercial uses, such as a pharmacy. The proposed building would include 12 stories and would measure approximately 218 feet in height (230 feet to the top of the mechanical penthouse). The Project would include seven floors of medical office uses over four floors of above-grade parking, and a ground floor containing a lobby for the medical office, and commercial uses. The Project would provide full-valet services for 418 parking spaces, including 393 vehicle parking spaces for medical office uses and 25 vehicle parking spaces for retail-commercial uses. The Project would also provide full-valet service for bicycle parking and would include 716 bicycle parking spaces for short- and long-term use.

2. Project Location and Surrounding Land Uses

a) Project Location

The Project Site is bounded by the frontage road of South San Vicente Boulevard to the west, Wilshire Boulevard and South Sweetzer Avenue to the south, a small, shared alley to the east, and Orange Street to the north, and is located within the Beverly Grove neighborhood of the Wilshire Community Plan area in the City of Los Angeles (City). The Project Site is approximately 0.9 miles south of the City of West Hollywood, and less than 200 feet (approximately 0.035 miles) east of the City of Beverly Hills, located on the eastern side of South San Vicente Boulevard. As shown on **Figure II-1, Project Location**, the Project Site is served by a network of regional transportation facilities that provide access to Greater Los Angeles.



SOURCE: Open Streetmap, 2020

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Figure II-1
Project Location

Regional access to the Project Site is provided by the Santa Monica Freeway (I-10), which runs east-west approximately two miles to the south of the Project Site, the Hollywood Freeway (US-101), which runs north-south approximately four miles east of the Project Site and the San Diego Freeway (I-405), which runs north-south approximately four miles west of the Project Site.

The Project Site is currently served by four Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) bus lines (30/330, 20/720, 728 and 105/705), one Antelope Valley Transit Authority (AVTA) bus route (786), and is within 1,500 feet of the future Wilshire Boulevard/La Cienega Boulevard Metro D (Purple) Line Station, which is currently under construction and is anticipated to be operational in 2023.¹

b) Surrounding Uses

As shown in **Figure II-2, Aerial View of the Project Site and Surrounding Uses**, the Project Site is in a highly urbanized area, bordered by mid- and high-rise commercial, office, and medical-related uses along South San Vicente Boulevard and Wilshire Boulevard to the west and south. Directly northwest of the Project Site along South San Vicente Boulevard, is a five-story office building with existing rooftop billboards, and an associated four-story parking structure. Further north is a three-story rehabilitation center. Directly across from the Project Site, in the City of Beverly Hills, is a 10-story office building with ground floor commercial uses. North of the 10-story office building, is a three-story office/retail building and two apartment complexes, two- and three-stories in height. To the south, across from the intersection of South San Vicente Boulevard and Wilshire Boulevard, is a low-rise commercial center and associated surface parking. To the southeast, fronting Wilshire Boulevard is a 22-story medical office building owned by Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, which includes a rooftop heliport. Directly east of the Project Site, across South Sweetzer Avenue, is a two-story brick building used as office space. East of the brick building is a 12-story office building used by the Jewish Federation Goldsmith Center and the five-story Los Angeles Obchestvo Remeslenogo Truda (ORT) College.

¹ Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), FAQ, <https://www.metro.net/projects/westside/faq-westside/>, accessed April 9, 2020.



SOURCE: Google Earth, 2016 (Aerial).

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Figure II-2
Aerial View of Project Site and Surrounding Uses

Directly northeast of the Project Site across the alley are two, two-story apartment buildings. Further to the north and east, along Orange Street and South Sweetzer Avenue, are low-rise multi-family and single-family residential uses, located within an area identified by SurveyLA as the proposed 6th Street-Orange Street Multi-Family Residential Historic District.² Low-rise single-family and multi-family residential uses are also located to the south, across from Wilshire Boulevard. Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and Beverly Center are located approximately 0.68 miles to the northwest; and Los Angeles County Museum of Art campus (LACMA) and La Brea Tar Pits are located approximately 0.75 miles to the southeast.

3. Existing Project Site Conditions

The Project Site is presently developed with a 5,738 square-foot vacant educational building and an 8,225 square-foot Big 5 Sporting Goods store.³ Surface parking associated with these uses is located on the southeastern portion of the Project Site, abutting the frontage road of South San Vicente Boulevard, South Sweetzer Avenue, and the alley to the northeast. Additional surface parking is located in the middle of the Project Site between the two buildings, and to the rear of the Big 5 Sporting Goods store. All parking areas are accessible from two driveways located along the frontage road of South San Vicente Boulevard and two parking entrances located within the shared alley.

4. Land Use and Zoning Designations

The Project Site is within the planning boundary of the Wilshire Community Plan area and has a General Plan land use designation of Limited Commercial. The Project Site is zoned C1-1VL-O, which permits commercial and retail uses.

In addition, the Project Site is located within a Transit Priority Area (TPA), which is defined by Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21099 as an area within 0.5 miles of an existing or planned major transit stop, if the planned stop is scheduled to be completed within the planning horizon included in a Transportation Improvement Program adopted pursuant to Section 450.216 or 450.322 of Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations. The City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning Zoning Information (ZI) File No. 2452 (Transit Priority Areas [TPAs] / Exemptions to Aesthetics and Parking within TPAs Pursuant to CEQA) was developed in response to Senate Bill (SB) 743 which, pursuant to PRC Section 21099 (d)(1), states that a project's aesthetic and parking impacts shall not be

² SurveyLA, Wilshire Historic Districts, Planning Districts and Multi-Property Resources, January 26, 2015.

³ The 5,738 square-foot vacant building previously housed the Montessori Children's World School. As the building was vacated October 2018, credit for this use was included as part of the baseline under CEQA as this reflects the amount of floor area that was in active use during the past two years.

considered a significant impact on the environment if: (1) the project is a residential, mixed-use residential, or employment center project, and (2) the project is located on an infill site within a transit priority area. PRC Section 21099 defines the criteria for an employment center, infill site, and TPAs. Specifically, “infill site” is defined as a location within an urban area that has been previously developed, or a vacant site where at least 75 percent of the perimeter of the site adjoins an improved public right-of-way. “TPAs” are defined as areas within 0.5 miles of a major transit stop that is existing or planned. A “major transit stop” is defined as a site containing an existing rail transit station or the intersection of two or more major bus routes with a frequency of service interval of 15 minutes or less during the morning and afternoon peak commute periods. Under ZI File No. 2452, a project shall be considered to be within a TPA if all parcels within the project have no more than 25 percent of their area farther than 0.5 miles from the major transit stop. The “Citywide Transit Priority Areas” map contained in ZI File No. 2452 illustrates overlapping TPAs within Downtown Los Angeles.

As discussed above, the Project is an employment center comprised of a mix of uses including office and retail-commercial uses on a previously developed “infill” site located 0.25 miles east of the future Wilshire Boulevard/La Cienega Boulevard Metro D (Purple) Line Station, which is currently under construction and is anticipated to be operational in 2023, the same year the Project is anticipated to be completed and occupied. As such, the Project meets the criteria of SB 743 and ZI File No. 2542.⁴ As discussed in ZI File No. 2542 and PRC Section 21099 (d)(1), visual resources, aesthetic character, shade and shadow, light and glare, and scenic vistas, and any other aesthetic impact as defined in the City’s CEQA Threshold Guide shall not be considered an impact, unless evaluation is required under other land use regulations of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC).

The Project Site is also located within a Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)-designated High Quality Transit Area (HQT), which is defined by the Connect SoCal: 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/ Sustainable Communities Strategy (2020-2045 RTP/SCS) as generally walkable transit villages or corridors that are within 0.5 mile of a well-served transit stop or a transit corridor with 15-minute or less service frequency during peak commute hours.

5. Project Objectives

CEQA Guidelines Section 15124(b) states that a project description shall contain “a statement of the objectives sought by the proposed project.” In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15124(b) further states that “the statement of objectives should include the underlying purpose of the project.”

⁴ Metro, FAQ, <https://www.metro.net/projects/westside/faq-westside/>, accessed April 9, 2020.

The underlying purpose of the Project is to redevelop the Project Site, which contains low-rise commercial buildings, with a mixed-use development that provides medical office and retail-commercial uses. As set forth in the CEQA Guidelines, the Project's specific objectives are as follows:

1. Encourage economic growth in the community through the creation of construction jobs and full-time, on-site jobs.
2. Redevelop the Project Site with a mixed-use project that primarily provides a medical office facility that would be compatible with surrounding medical facilities to serve the local community and regional area near a key regional medical center.
3. Incorporate sustainable and green building design and construction that exceed building code and Title 24 requirements in areas related to landscape design (green roofs/balconies) to incorporate ecofriendly building materials, systems and features, solar efficiency (solar ready roofs), efficient and low flow water management non-VOC paints and adhesives, , high performance building envelope and energy efficient building systems.
4. Develop the site with a well-designed commercial and medical office project within a transit priority area which would maximize the benefit of nearby Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) bus lines, an Antelope Valley Transit Authority (AVTA) bus route, and the future Wilshire Boulevard/La Cienega Boulevard Metro D (Purple) Line Station (expected to open in 2023) and, thus, would support smart growth with the intent of reducing air quality emissions and VMT generation.
5. Construct a medical office building at an intensity consistent with the zoning for commercial buildings on Wilshire Boulevard which include similar mid-rise office buildings in proximity of transit and along corridors.
6. Enhance the urban built environment by fostering pedestrian activity through ground level restaurant or retail uses, street trees and landscaping, and signage and lighting compatible with the surrounding area.

6. Description of the Project

a) Project Overview

The Project would replace the existing uses on the Project Site with a 12-story medical office/retail-commercial building with up to 145,305 square feet of floor area, resulting in a 4.5:1 floor area ratio (FAR), comprised of up to 140,305 square feet of medical office uses and 5,000 square feet of ground floor retail-commercial uses. The proposed building would be approximately 218 feet in height (230 feet to the top of the mechanical penthouse), with seven floors of medical office uses over four levels of above-grade parking, and a ground floor containing a lobby for the medical office and retail-commercial uses for a total of 12 stories. The Project

would provide 418 parking spaces, including 393 vehicle parking spaces for medical office and 25 vehicle parking spaces for retail-commercial uses. The parking garage would serve as a full-valet garage. The Project would also include 716 bicycle parking spaces for short- and long-term use. The proposed uses are summarized in **Table II-1, Project Summary**.

**TABLE II-1
PROJECT SUMMARY**

Uses	Total
Site Area	32,290 sf
Existing	
Vacant Educational Building ^a	5,738 sf
Big 5 Sporting Goods Store	8,225 sf
Proposed	
Medical Office	140,305 sf
Retail-Commercial ^b	5,000 sf (up to 4,000 sf restaurant uses and 1,000 sf of retail uses)
Total Floor Area	145,305 sf
Proposed FAR	4.5:1
Outdoor Open Space	
Ground Floor	815 sf
Floor 6	1,864 sf
Floor 7	328 sf
Floor 8	570 sf
Floor 9	533 sf
Floor 10	533 sf
Parking	
Vehicle	418 spaces (393 spaces for medical office, and 25 spaces for retail-commercial uses)
Bicycle	716 spaces

sf = square feet; FAR = floor area ratio

^a The 5,738 square foot vacant building previously housed the Montessori Children's World School. As the building was vacated October 2018, credit for this use was included as part of the baseline under CEQA as this reflects the amount of floor area that was in active use during the past two years.

^b Up to 4,000 sf of this space may be developed as a small restaurant, with the remaining 1,000 sf developed as retail.

SOURCE: ZGF, 2019.

b) Retail-Commercial Uses (Floor 1)

The Project's ground level (Floor 1) would contain 5,000 square feet of retail-commercial uses that may be demised into one or more separate retail-commercial spaces. As designed, the larger retail-commercial space, of which up to 4,000 square feet may be used for restaurant uses with up to 815 square feet of associated outdoor dining, would front the corners of South Sweetzer Avenue, Wilshire Boulevard, and South San Vicente Boulevard. The second retail-commercial space would front South San Vicente Boulevard.

Adjacent to the commercial space, an 1,860 square-foot lobby area would provide access from the frontage road of South San Vicente Boulevard to elevators and stairs for the Project's medical office areas. In addition, a loading dock, generator, compactors, biohazardous storage area, and receiving storage area would be located on the western portion of the Project Site.

A visitor drop-off and valet area would be accessible from the visitor entrance off of the frontage road of South San Vicente Boulevard to accommodate a parking queue and ride-share drop off area.

c) Parking (Floors 2 through 5)

The Project would provide 418 valet-parking spaces within four, screened above-ground levels (Floors 2 through 5). The parking spaces would be designed to blend with the building's architecture to minimize views of the Project's parking uses from the street front. Further discussion is provided in **Subsection II.6.f, Access, Circulation, Parking and Bicycle Amenities**, below.

d) Medical Office Uses (Floors 6 through 12)

Floors 6 through 12 would include medical office spaces totaling up to 140,305 square feet of floor area. Floors 6 through 10 would also include small terraced landscaped areas overlooking South San Vicente Boulevard.

The Project's Site Plan, Conceptual Diagrams, and Elevations are provided in **Figures II-3 through II-8**.



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SOURCE: ZGF Architects, 2019

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Figure II-4
Rendering Street Level towards Northwest

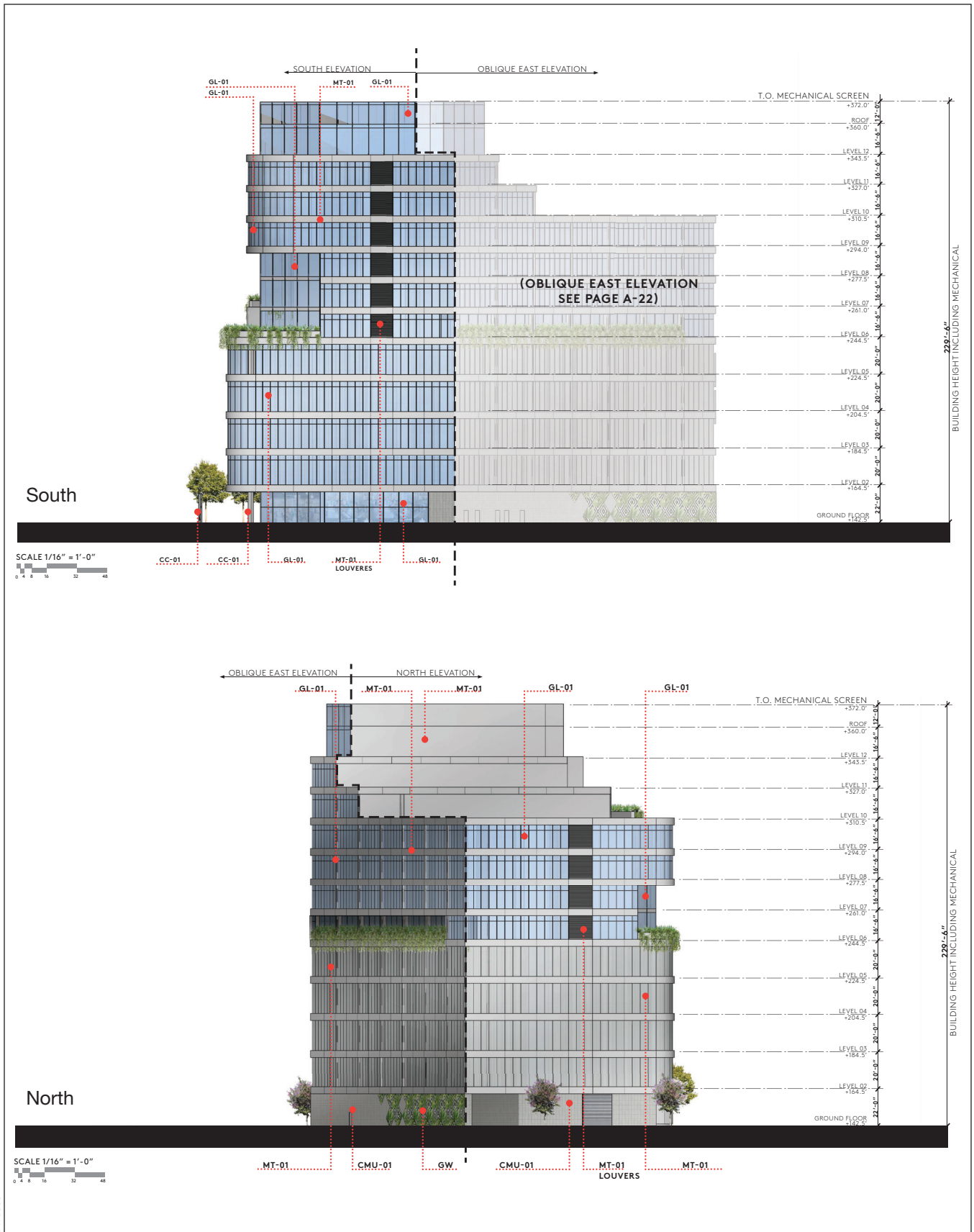


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SOURCE: ZGF Architects, 2019

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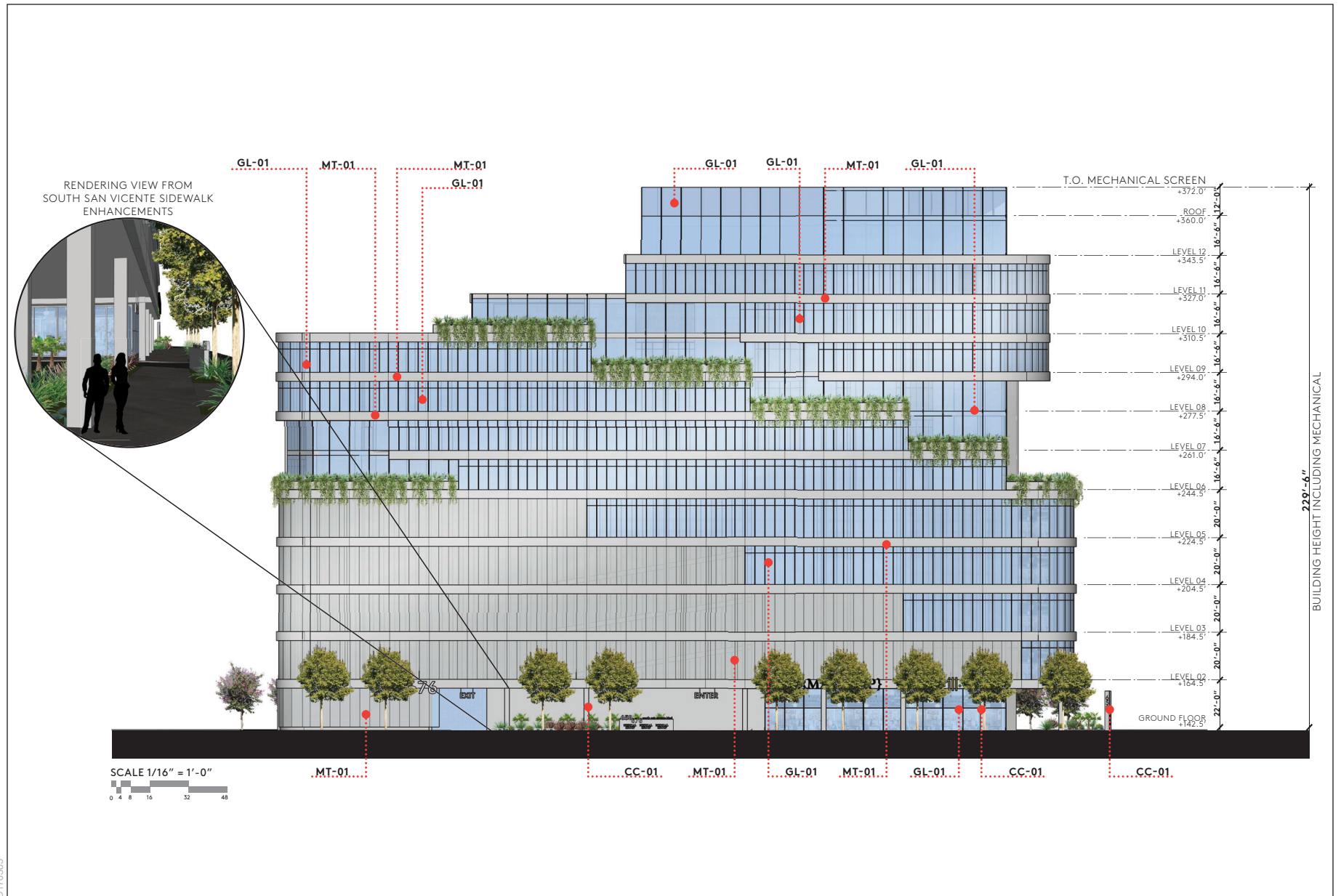
Figure II-5
Aerial Rendering towards Northwest at Dusk



SOURCE: ZGF Architects, 2020

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Figure II-7
South and North Elevation



SOURCE: ZGF Architects, 2020

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Figure II-8
West Elevation

e) Design and Architecture

The Project is designed as a modern building that would complement the surrounding contemporary high-rise commercial and office buildings extending along South San Vicente Boulevard and Wilshire Boulevard. The building is designed with stepped terraces to break up the building's massing. The height of the proposed building would visually serve as a horizontal extension of the office buildings to the north and south. The floor-to-ceiling clear glass panels would bring light and views directly into the medical office spaces. The building is located on the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and South Sweetzer Avenue, where larger buildings line the street. The building steps back toward the shorter office buildings on South San Vicente Boulevard and towards the residential neighborhood to the north. **Figure II-9, *Landscape Plan***, illustrates the proposed landscaping for the Project. The ground level streetscape includes landscaping and seating for the potential outdoor dining area that would be located on the corners of South Sweetzer Avenue, Wilshire Boulevard, and South San Vicente Boulevard. The retail and restaurant space on the ground floor of the proposed building would be visible through clear windows and doors to create an inviting and accessible areas from the sidewalk. As previously discussed, the ground floor would include 815 square feet dedicated to outdoor seating for the potential café area. In addition, Floors 6 through 10 would include small terraced landscaped patios that would overlook South San Vicente Boulevard and would be exclusively accessible by the building tenants. In particular, Floor 6 would include 1,864 square feet of landscaped areas, Floor 7 would include 328 square feet of landscaped areas, Floor 8 would include 570 square feet of landscaped area, Floor 9 would include 533 square feet of landscaped area, and Floor 10 would include 533 square feet of landscaped area.

There are seven trees existing on the Project Site, all of which are significant (eight inches or greater of cumulative trunk diameter if multi-trunked, as measured 54 inches above ground), non-protected trees, as discussed in the Tree Report, provided in Appendix A, of this Initial Study. The Project would replace all significant, non-protected trees at 1:1 ratio with a minimum of 24-inch box tree. As illustrated in Figure II-9, the Project would provide 17 trees on the ground level, with additional trees provided in the small terraced landscaped patios on Floors 6 through 10.

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f) Access and Circulation, Parking and Bicycle Amenities

As illustrated in Figure II-3, vehicle access for employees to self-park within the parking levels (Floors 2 through 5) would be provided from Orange Street. A visitor drop-off and valet area would be accessible from the frontage road of South San Vicente Boulevard and would accommodate a parking queue and ride-share drop-off area. A loading dock serving the medical office and retail-commercial uses would be located and accessed from Orange Street. Vehicular access to the building's parking garage would not be provided through the alley.

Pedestrian access to the retail-commercial uses would be from South Sweetzer Avenue and the frontage road of South San Vicente Boulevard. Access to the medical office uses would be from the ground level lobby along the frontage road of South San Vicente Boulevard, and from the parking levels via internal stairs and elevators. In addition, there would be pedestrian access for building staff to access the building's utility rooms off of the alley.

The Project would provide 418 vehicle parking spaces within four above-ground levels (Floors 2 through 5), and would include 393 vehicle parking spaces for medical office uses and 25 vehicle parking spaces for ground level retail-commercial uses. Parking spaces on each level would be provided in a combination of single, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and double-stacked parking spaces, which would require 20-foot ceiling heights for Floors 2 through 5. Pursuant to LAMC Section 12.21 A.4(c), the combination of medical office and retail-restaurant uses would require a total of 746 vehicle parking spaces. Pursuant to LAMC Section 12.32 P, the Project is requesting a reduction in parking not to exceed 20 percent, incident to a legislative action, reducing the required vehicle parking to a total of 597 spaces. As required by LAMC Section 12.21 A.16, the project would be required to provide 15 bicycle parking spaces. However, pursuant to LAMC Section 12.21 A.4(c), non-residential projects within a TPA may replace up to 30 percent of the required automobile parking spaces, or a reduction of 179 vehicle parking spaces, with bicycle parking at a rate of four bicycle parking spaces per vehicle parking space, thereby, further reducing the required vehicle parking spaces to 418 spaces, in exchange for providing 716 bicycle parking spaces. The Project would provide a total of 716 bicycle parking spaces and 418 vehicle parking spaces.

Consistent with the requirements of the Los Angeles Green Building Code, the Project would provide 84 parking spaces that would be capable of supporting future electrical vehicle supply equipment (EVSE) and 42 parking spaces that would be equipped with electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.

Parking areas would be screened with glass and metal panels and designed to blend with the building's architecture to minimize views of the parking uses from the South San Vicente street frontage.

g) Lighting and Signage

New lighting would include building identification, commercial accent lighting, wayfinding, balcony/garden lighting, and security lighting. Pedestrian areas including pathways and entryways into the Project would be well-lit for security and ground-mounted. As required by LAMC Section 93.0117(b), exterior light sources and building materials would be designed such that they would not cause more than two (2) foot-candles of lighting intensity or generate direct glare onto exterior glazed windows or glass doors on any property containing residential units; an elevated habitable porch, deck, or balcony on any property containing residential units; or any ground surface intended for uses, such as recreation, barbecue or lawn areas, or any other property containing a residential unit or units. Light fixtures would be shielded and directed towards the areas to be lit and away from adjacent light-sensitive residential land uses.

Building identification signage would be provided for the ground level retail and/or restaurant uses. The building would also include street address and identification/wayfinding signage for the vehicular and pedestrian entries to the building. In addition, the building would include directional signage that prioritizes and directs the pedestrian and guest vehicular access to the frontage road of South San Vicente Boulevard and Orange Street. No off-site billboard advertising is proposed as part of the Project. All proposed signage would be designed in conformance with applicable LAMC requirements.

h) Site Security

The Project would incorporate security measures for the safety of employees and visitors to the Project Site. During construction of the Project, the Project Site would be fenced and gated with surveillance cameras to monitor the site during off hours. During operation of the Project, access to the parking structure would be controlled through gated entries, and the entry areas would be well illuminated. Project Site security would include controlled keycard access to medical office spaces, security lighting within common areas and entryways, and closed circuit TV monitoring (CCTV).

i) Sustainability

Energy saving and sustainable design features would be incorporated into the Project as the proposed building would comply with Title 24 California Code of Regulations and the City of Los Angeles Green Building Code and exceed some of these regulatory requirements to the greatest extent feasible. Design features would include energy conservation, water conservation, and pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly site design. As it relates to energy conservation, the Project would include ENERGY STAR-rated appliances and install energy efficient heaters and

air conditioning systems. The Project would also provide solar ready wiring on the highest roof level. The terraced landscaped areas on Floors 6 through 10 would serve as partial green roofs that would serve to help cool the building, and would include sustainable paving materials that would minimize heat. All glass used in the building would have minimal reflectivity to reduce glare to surrounding neighbors. As it relates to water conservation, the project would incorporate efficient water management and sustainable landscaping. The proposed building would also include a pedestrian friendly design with ground floor commercial uses and an outdoor dining area to activate the street. Bicycle parking would also be included on the ground floor near the entrance of the lobby, which would serve to promote bicycle usage. In addition, the vehicle parking spaces proposed on the Project Site would be capable of supporting future EVSE, as well as equipped with EV charging stations, as described further above under **Subsection II.6.f, Access, Circulation, Parking and Bicycle Amenities**, which would serve to reduce use of transportation fuel.

j) Construction Information

Construction is anticipated to begin in 2021 with an estimated completion date in 2023, over an approximately 34-month construction period. The total soil excavated would be approximately 12,222 cubic yards (cy), all of which would be exported off-site. Construction hours would occur in accordance with the LAMC requirements, which prohibit construction between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., Monday through Friday, 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, and at any time on Sunday. Parking for construction workers would be provided on the Project Site or leased from nearby off-site parking areas. Shuttle service would also be provided for those construction workers who park in off-site parking areas.

7. Anticipated Project Approvals

The list below includes the anticipated requests for approval of the Project. The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will analyze impacts associated with the Project and will provide environmental review sufficient for all necessary entitlements and public agency actions associated with the Project. The discretionary entitlements, reviews, permits and approvals required to implement the Project include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Pursuant to LAMC Section 11.57, a General Plan Amendment to re-designate the underlying land use from Limited Commercial to Regional Center Commercial;
- Pursuant to LAMC Sections 12.32 F, P and Q, a Vesting Zone Change and Height District Change from C1-1VL-O to (Q)C2-2D-O to allow for an FAR of 4.5:1 and up to a 20 percent reduction in vehicle parking;

- Pursuant to LAMC Section 16.05, Site Plan Review for a project resulting in greater than 50,000 square feet of nonresidential floor area;
- Pursuant to LAMC Section 17.15, a Vesting Tentative Tract Map (VTTM 74865) for a merger of seven (7) lots and re-subdivision of a 0.76-acre site to create one (1) ground lot and one (1) airspace lot; and
- Other approvals as needed and as may be required such as construction permits, including demolition and building permits, grading, excavation, foundation, and associated permits; temporary street closure permits, grading permits, and sign permits.

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