

APPENDIX D

Paleontological Resources Assessment



Stocker Street Creative Project

Paleontological Resources Assessment

prepared for

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November 2023

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Executive Summary

Purpose and Scope

Rincon Consultants, Inc. (Rincon) was retained to conduct a Paleontological Resources Assessment (PRA) for the Stocker Street Creative Project (project) in Los Angeles, California. This PRA includes a literature review, paleontological sensitivity assessment, formal locality search from the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and reporting consistent with the professional standards of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP; 2010) to determine whether the proposed action would result in significant impacts to paleontological resources under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Results of Investigation

A single geologic unit, Quaternary alluvium, is mapped at the surface within the project site (Dibblee and Ehrenspeck 1991). Two other geologic units, Quaternary old alluvium, and the Inglewood Formation, are mapped at the surface within 500 feet of the project site, and thus, they may be encountered at shallow depths below the project site during project excavations. Quaternary alluvium and the Inglewood Formation have low paleontological sensitivity, and Quaternary old alluvium has high paleontological sensitivity.

A paleontological records search of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County recovered no known fossil localities within the project site (Bell 2022). However, it did recover several fossil localities within one mile of the project site at depths as shallow as 6 feet below the surface in areas also mapped as Quaternary alluvium.

Impacts and Recommendations

Significant impacts to paleontological resources include the destruction, damage, or loss of scientifically important paleontological resources or associated stratigraphic data. Ground-disturbing activities in undisturbed sediments with high paleontological sensitivity (i.e., Quaternary older alluvium) have the potential to significantly impact paleontological resources under CEQA. Ground-disturbing construction activities for the project are anticipated to consist of grading for building pads and excavating/trenching for new utilities and storm drains. The project's geotechnical investigation found that fill sediments underlie the project site to depths ranging from 1.5 to 4.5 feet (Geodyne Engineering, Inc. 2022). Paleontological resources may occur as shallow as 6 feet below the surface in areas mapped as Quaternary alluvium in the region around the project site (Bell 2022; Dibblee and Ehrenspeck 1991). Excavations exceeding 6 feet in depth could significantly impact paleontological resources.

Mitigation Measure PAL-1 is recommended to reduce potential impacts to paleontological resources to less than significant level and would effectively mitigate the project's impacts to these resources through the recovery, identification, and curation of previously unrecovered fossils.

1 Introduction

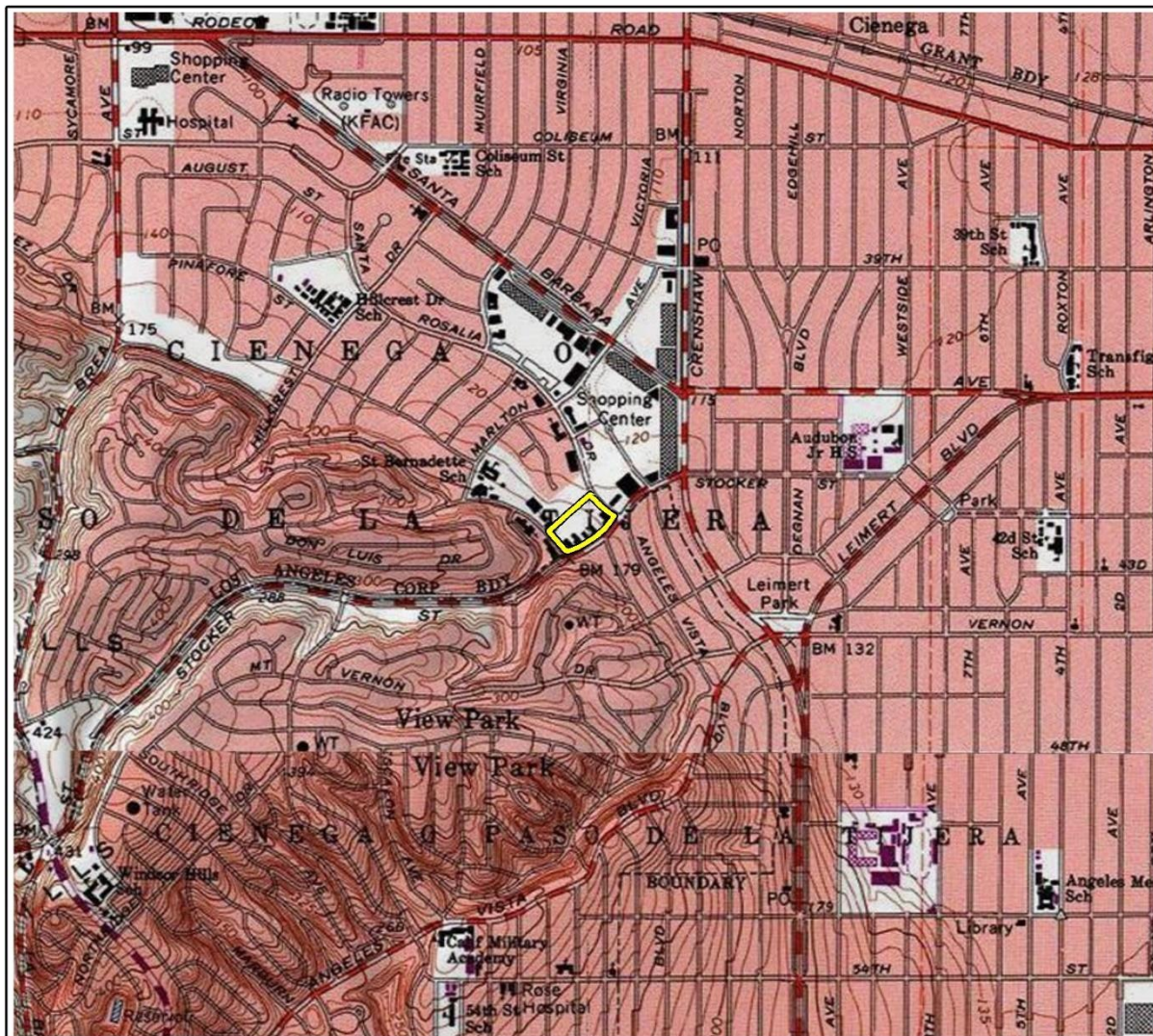
Rincon Consultants, Inc. (Rincon) conducted a desktop Paleontological Resources Assessment (PRA) for the Stocker Street Creative Project (project) in Los Angeles County, California, on behalf of Terry A. Hayes Associates, Inc. This assessment includes a literature review, paleontological sensitivity assessment, fossil locality search from the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHMLA) and reporting consistent with the professional standards of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP; 2010). The City of Los Angeles is the lead agency for this project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Paleontological resources (i.e., fossils) are the remains or traces of prehistoric life. Fossils are typically preserved in layered sedimentary rocks, and the distribution of fossils across the landscape is controlled by the distribution and exposure of the fossiliferous sedimentary rock units at and near the surface. Construction-related impacts that typically affect or have the potential to affect paleontological resources include mass excavation operations, drilling/borehole excavations, trenching/tunneling, and grading. Ground-disturbing construction activities associated with the proposed project would mainly consist of grading, trenching, and excavation. This PRA provides a list of the formations mapped at the surface within the project site and formations that underlie those mapped at the surface that may be impacted by project construction activities.

1.1 Project Location

The project site is located at 3701-3761 Stocker Street in the City of Los Angeles' Crenshaw neighborhood, within the West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Community Plan Area (CPA) (Figure 1). Specifically, the 5.1-acre project site encompasses portions of Section 10 of Township 02 South, Range 14 West on the *Hollywood, California* United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle. The project site is composed of five parcels; each parcel contains a single building (Figure 2). The five buildings historically functioned as a five-building medical-office complex known as the Stocker Street Medical Center.

Figure 1 Regional Location



Basemap provided by National Geographic Society, Esri and their licensors
 © 2022. Hollywood Quadrangle, T02S R14W S10. The topographic
 representation depicted in this map may not portray all of the features
 currently found in the vicinity today and/or features depicted in this map
 may have changed since the original topographic map was assembled.

 Project Location

0 1,000 2,000 Feet

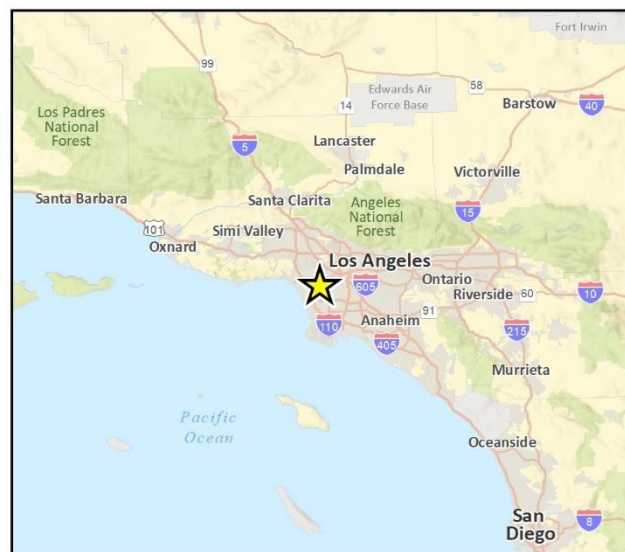


Figure 2 Project Site Map



1.2 Project Description

The following project description was provided to Rincon in November 2023.

The Project consists of the demolition of five substantially unoccupied office buildings and the construction of a campus for studio and sound stage production on an approximately five-acre site. The integrated campus would consist of six new buildings (Buildings A-F). Building A would be a three-story (45 feet), 36,000-square-foot office building that would include 500 square feet of retail space and a 9,500-square-foot food court on the first floor. Building B would be a six-story (93 feet), 144,000-square-foot building with 44,400 square feet of studio production support facilities on the first two floors and 90,060 square feet of office space above; the roof (partial 7th floor) would include an enclosed 9,000-square-foot restaurant with adjacent garden area that would provide outdoor seating for the restaurant and would be used for special events. Building C would be a one-story (15 feet), 300-square-foot security office that would include a restroom, breakroom and surveillance monitors and computer equipment. Building D would be a one-story (50 feet), 32,000-square-foot building with 30,000 square feet of studio sound stages and 2,000 square feet of back-of-house facilities. Building E would be a one-story (49 feet), 40,000-square-foot building with a basement and mezzanine with 19,200 square feet of studio sound stages, a 13,000-square-foot mill shop for set production, 3,100 square feet of offices for campus management, and 4,500 square feet of back-of-house facilities. Building F would be a five-story (45 feet), 122,200-square-foot open parking garage with 380 parking stalls, a 3,000-square-foot retail/community room at street level, and 2,700 square feet of back-of-house facilities. There would also be a 31,000-square-foot open space area between Buildings A, B and F designed for community gatherings and special events.

2 Regulations

2.1 State Regulations

California Environmental Quality Act

Paleontological resources are protected under CEQA, which states a project would “normally” have a significant effect on the environment if project effects exceed an identified threshold of significance (CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.7[a]). Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines (the Environmental Checklist Form) provides suggested thresholds of significance for evaluating a project’s environmental impacts, including impacts to paleontological resources. In Section VII(f), the question is posed thus: “Will the project directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?” To determine the uniqueness of a given paleontological resource, it must first be identified or recovered (i.e., salvaged). Therefore, CEQA mandates mitigation of adverse impacts, to the extent practicable, to paleontological resources.

CEQA does not define “a unique paleontological resource or site.” However, the SVP (2010) has defined a “significant paleontological resource” in the context of environmental review as follows:

Fossils and fossiliferous deposits, here defined as consisting of identifiable vertebrate fossils, large or small, uncommon invertebrate, plant, and trace fossils, and other data that provide taphonomic, taxonomic, phylogenetic, paleoecologic, stratigraphic, and/or biochronologic information.

Paleontological resources are typically to be older than recorded human history and/or older than middle Holocene (i.e., older than about 5,000 radiocarbon years) (SVP 2010).

The loss of paleontological resources meeting the criteria outlined above (i.e., a significant paleontological resource) would be a significant impact under CEQA, and the CEQA lead agency is responsible for mitigating impacts to paleontological resources, where practicable, in compliance with CEQA and other applicable statutes.

California Public Resources Code

California Public Resources Code Section 5097.5 states:

No person shall knowingly and willfully excavate upon, or remove, destroy, injure, or deface any historic or prehistoric ruins, burial grounds, archaeological or vertebrate paleontological site, including fossilized footprints, inscriptions made by human agency, or any other archaeological, paleontological or historical feature, situated on public lands, except with the express permission of the public agency having jurisdiction over such lands. Violation of this section is a misdemeanor.

Here “public lands” means those owned by, or under the jurisdiction of, the State or any city, county, district, authority, or public corporation, or any agency thereof. Consequently, public agencies are required to comply with Public Resources Code Section 5097.5 for their own activities, including construction and maintenance, and for permit actions (e.g., encroachment permits) undertaken by others.

2.2 Regional and Local Regulations

City of Los Angeles General Plan

Section 3 of the Conservation Element, adopted in September 2001, includes policies for the protection of paleontological resources. As stated therein, it is the City's objective that paleontological resources be protected for historical, cultural research, and/or educational purposes. Section 3 identifies site protection as important, stating:

"Pursuant to CEQA, if a land development project is within a potentially significant paleontological area, the developer is required to contact a bonafide paleontologist to arrange for assessment of the potential impact and mitigation of potential disruption of or damage to the site".

Section 3 sets as a policy to continue the identification and protection of significant paleontological sites and/or resources known to exist or that are identified during land development, demolition, or property modification activities (City of Los Angeles 2001).

West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Community Plan

The project site is within the West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Community Plan area within the City of Los Angeles. The West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Community Plan Implementation Overlay District (Ordinance No. 184794) contains a single policy, CR9, relevant to paleontological resources. It states:

Projects shall ensure that during excavation and grading, if paleontological resources are uncovered, all work in that area shall cease and be diverted so as to allow for a determination of the value of the resource. Construction activities in that area may commence once the uncovered resources are collected by a paleontologist and properly processed. Any paleontological remains and/or reports and surveys shall be submitted to the Los Angeles County Natural History Museum.

3 Paleontological Resources Assessment Guidelines

Paleontological resources are limited, nonrenewable resources of scientific, cultural, and educational value and are afforded protection under state and local laws and regulations. This PRA satisfies Public Resources Code Section 5097.5 requirements, follows guidelines and significance criteria specified by the SVP (2010).

3.1 Paleontological Sensitivity

Paleontological sensitivity refers to the potential for a geologic unit to produce scientifically significant fossils. Direct impacts to paleontological resources occur when earthwork activities, such as grading or trenching, cut into the geologic deposits within which fossils are buried and physically destroy the fossils. Because fossils are the remains of prehistoric animal and plant life, they are considered to be nonrenewable. These activities may constitute significant impacts under CEQA or adverse effects under federal environmental protection laws and may require mitigation. Sensitivity is determined by rock type, history of the geologic unit in producing significant fossils, and fossil localities recorded from that unit. Paleontological sensitivity is derived from the known fossil data collected from the entire geologic unit, not just from a specific survey.

The discovery of a vertebrate fossil locality is of greater significance than that of an invertebrate fossil locality, especially if it contains a microvertebrate assemblage. The recognition of new vertebrate fossil locations could provide important information on the geographical range of the taxa, their radiometric age, evolutionary characteristics, depositional environment, and other important scientific research questions. Vertebrate fossils are almost always significant because they occur more rarely than invertebrates or plants. Thus, geological units having the potential to contain vertebrate fossils are considered the most sensitive.

3.2 Resource Assessment Criteria

In its Standard Procedures for the Assessment and Mitigation of Adverse Impacts to Paleontological Resources, the SVP outlines guidelines for categorizing paleontological sensitivity of geologic units within a project site. The SVP describes sedimentary rock units as having a high, low, undetermined, or no potential for containing significant nonrenewable paleontological resources. This criterion is based on rock units within which vertebrates or significant invertebrate fossils have been determined by previous studies to be present or likely to be present. Significant paleontological resources are fossils or assemblages of fossils, which are unique, unusual, rare, uncommon, diagnostically, stratigraphically, taxonomically, or regionally (SVP 2010). The paleontological sensitivity of the project site has been evaluated according to the following SVP (2010) categories:

- **High Potential (Sensitivity).** Rock units from which significant vertebrate or significant invertebrate fossils or significant suites of plant fossils have been recovered are considered to have a high potential for containing significant non-renewable fossiliferous resources. These units include but are not limited to, sedimentary formations and some volcanic formations which contain significant nonrenewable paleontological resources anywhere within their geographical extent, and sedimentary rock units temporally or lithologically suitable for the

preservation of fossils. Sensitivity comprises both (a) the potential for yielding abundant or significant vertebrate fossils or for yielding a few significant fossils, large or small, vertebrate, invertebrate, or botanical and (b) the importance of recovered evidence for new and significant taxonomic, phylogenetic, ecologic, or stratigraphic data. Areas which contain potentially datable organic remains older than recent, including deposits associated with nests or middens, and areas that may contain new vertebrate deposits, traces, or trackways are also classified as significant. Full-time monitoring is typically recommended during any project-related ground disturbance in geologic units with high sensitivity.

- **Low Potential (Sensitivity).** Sedimentary rock units that are potentially fossiliferous but have not yielded fossils in the past or contain common and/or widespread invertebrate fossils of well documented and understood taphonomic (processes affecting an organism following death, burial, and removal from the ground), phylogenetic species (evolutionary relationships among organisms), and habitat ecology. Reports in the paleontological literature or field surveys by a qualified vertebrate paleontologist may allow determination that some areas or units have low potentials for yielding significant fossils prior to the start of construction. Generally, these units will be poorly represented by specimens in institutional collections and will not require protection or salvage operations.
- **Undetermined Potential (Sensitivity).** Specific areas underlain by sedimentary rock units for which little information is available are considered to have undetermined fossiliferous potentials. Field surveys by a qualified vertebrate paleontologist to specifically determine the potentials of the rock units are required before programs of impact mitigation for such areas may be developed.
- **No Potential.** Rock units of metamorphic or igneous origin are commonly classified as having no potential for containing significant paleontological resources

4 Methods

Rincon reviewed published geologic maps to identify the geologic units present at and below the surface within the project site (Dibblee and Ehrenspeck 1991). Rincon reviewed the online paleontological collections database of the University of California Museum of Paleontology (UCMP; 2022) and Paleobiology Database (PBDB; 2022) and consulted primary literature to identify known fossil localities in Los Angeles County and surrounding regions from similar geologic units to those identified within the project site. Rincon requested a records search of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County on May 24, 2022, to identify any fossil localities known from within the project site or nearby fossil localities known from the same geologic units as found in the project site. The project site contains no bedrock exposures, so a field survey was not warranted.

Paleontological sensitivity ratings of the geological formations were assigned based on the findings of the records search and literature review and based on the potential impacts to nonrenewable paleontological resources from project construction following SVP (2010) guidelines.

5 Description of Resources

5.1 Geologic Setting

The project site is situated in the Peninsular Ranges, one of the eleven geomorphic provinces of California (California Geological Survey 2002), defined as a region of unique topography and geology that is distinguished from other regions based on its landforms and geologic history. In general, the Peninsular Ranges consist of northwest-southeast trending mountain ranges and faults (Norris and Webb 1976). These mountains are generally comprised of Mesozoic to Cenozoic plutonic and extrusive igneous and Cretaceous marine sedimentary rocks. Specifically, the project site is within the Los Angeles Basin, which lies at the northern edge of the Peninsular Ranges. The Los Angeles Basin is a sedimentary basin which contains many-kilometer-thick layers of Cenozoic marine and terrestrial sedimentary rocks and has undergone much deformation due to tectonic folding and faulting. Locally, the project site is situated just northeast of the Baldwin Hills.

5.2 Geology of the Project Site

The surface geology of region around the project site was mapped at a scale of 1:24,000 by Dibblee and Ehrenspeck (1991), who identified a single geologic unit underlying the project site, Quaternary alluvium (Figure 3). However, two other geologic units, Quaternary older alluvium and the Inglewood Formation, are mapped at the surface 100 and 300 feet from the project site, respectively, and, therefore, may be encountered at fairly shallow depths below the surface. Therefore, the lithological characteristics and paleontological sensitivity of all three geologic units are described.

Quaternary alluvium

Quaternary alluvium underlies the entire project site (Figure 3). Quaternary alluvium consists of gravel, sand, and clay deposited in valley areas and minor stream channels (Dibblee and Ehrenspeck 1991). Quaternary alluvium is Holocene in age meaning it is likely too young (i.e., less than 5,000 years old) to preserve scientifically significant paleontological resources (SVP 2010). Therefore, Quaternary alluvium has low paleontological sensitivity.

Quaternary older alluvium

Quaternary older alluvium is not mapped within the project site but is exposed at the surface less than 100 feet from the site's southernmost corner of the project site, meaning that it may be encountered at relatively shallow depths in the subsurface in the project site (Figure 3). Some authors (e.g., Campbell et al. 2016) refer to these deposits as the San Pedro Sand. Quaternary older alluvium consists of gray to light brown, slightly consolidated, gravel, sand, silt, and clay (Dibblee and Ehrenspeck 1991). Quaternary older alluvium is Pleistocene in age, and Pleistocene-aged alluvial sediments, including the San Pedro Sand, have produced scientifically significant fossils throughout Los Angeles County, including taxa such as saber-toothed cats (*Smilodon*), mammoths (*Mammuthus*), mastodons (*Mammut*), ground sloths (*Paramylodon*, *Megalonyx*), horse (*Equus*), rodents, birds, and reptiles (Jefferson 2010; Paleobiology Database 2022; University of California Museum of Paleontology 2022). Therefore, Quaternary older alluvium has high paleontological sensitivity.

Inglewood Formation

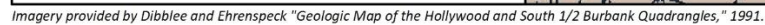
The Inglewood Formation is not mapped within the project site but is exposed at the surface less than 300 feet from the site's western edge meaning that it may be encountered at relatively shallow depths in the subsurface in the project site (Figure 3). The Inglewood Formation consists of light gray, friable, fine-grained sandstone interbedded with gray, soft siltstone that is Pleistocene in age (Dibblee and Ehrenspeck 1991; Campbell et al. 2016). No fossils are reported from the Inglewood Formation (PBDB 2022; UCMP 2022) although its age and lithology suggest that it would be conducive to fossil preservation. Therefore, the Inglewood Formation has low paleontological sensitivity.

Subsurface Geology

The project site is already developed for commercial use with several buildings in the southeastern half and a parking lot in the northeastern half. The geotechnical report conducted for the project encountered artificial fill throughout the project site that reached between 1.5 and 4.5 feet below the surface (Geodyne Engineering, Inc. 2022). Below this fill layer, alluvial sediments occurred to the maximum explored depth of 51.5 feet, which consisted of olive-gray to brown, silty sand to gravelly sand with occasional pockets of gravel. This sediment description is in general agreement with these sediments corresponding to Quaternary alluvium or Quaternary older alluvium (or San Pedro Sand; Campbell et al. 2016), but do not correspond to sediments typical of the Inglewood Formation. Therefore, it is assumed that ground disturbance for this project may impact Quaternary alluvium and Quaternary older alluvium/San Pedro Sand, and it is unlikely that sediments of the Inglewood Formation will be impacted.

5.3 Paleontology of the Project Site

A formal fossil locality search of the NHMLA discovered no fossil localities within the project site (Bell 2022). However, the search identified several fossil localities from areas mapped as Holocene-aged sediments less than a mile from the project site, yielding horse (*Equus*), elephant (*Mammuthus*), bison (*Bison*), camel (*Camelops*), rodent, fish, and invertebrate fossils, from sites as little as 6 feet below the surface. These localities are located in areas mapped as Holocene-aged alluvium, similar to the project site (Figure 3), but their fossil content demonstrates that highly sensitive, Pleistocene-aged sediments can occur in the region as little as 6 feet below the surface.



6 Evaluation, Impacts, and Recommendations

6.1 Paleontological Sensitivity Evaluation

The project site is directly underlain by a single geologic unit with low paleontological sensitivity, Quaternary alluvium, as shown in Figure 3. Two other geologic units are mapped at the surface within 500 feet of the project site, meaning that they likely underlie the project site at fairly shallow depths in the subsurface: Quaternary older alluvium, which has high paleontological sensitivity, and Inglewood Formation, which has low paleontological sensitivity.

6.2 Impacts

Significant impacts to paleontological resources include the destruction, damage, or loss of scientifically important paleontological resources or associated stratigraphic data. Ground-disturbing activities (i.e., grading, excavating, trenching) in undisturbed sediments with high paleontological sensitivity (i.e., Quaternary older alluvium) have the potential to significantly impact paleontological resources under CEQA.

Ground-disturbing construction activities for the project are anticipated to consist of grading for building pads and excavating/trenching for new utilities and storm drains. Some buildings will be built almost entirely above the current grade, but others will require excavations/grading below the current grade. The project's geotechnical investigation found that fill sediments underlie the project site to depths ranging from 1.5 to 4.5 feet (Geodyne Engineering, Inc. 2022). Nearby NHMLA fossil localities suggest that paleontological resources may occur as shallow as 6 feet below the surface in areas mapped as Quaternary alluvium (Bell 2022; Dibblee and Ehrenspeck 1991). If excavations were to reach 6 feet or more below the surface, then this project could significantly impact paleontological resources.

6.3 Recommendations

This mitigation measure would apply to all ground-disturbing activities within the project site. Implementation of Mitigation Measure PAL-1 would reduce potential impacts to paleontological resources to less than significant level and would effectively mitigate the project's impacts to these resources through the recovery, identification, and curation of previously unrecovered fossils.

PAL-1 Paleontological Resources Monitoring and Mitigation

- **Qualified Professional Paleontologist.** Prior to excavation, the project applicant shall retain a Qualified Professional Paleontologist, as defined by the SVP (2010). The Qualified Professional Paleontologist shall direct all mitigation measures related to paleontological resources.
- **Paleontological Worker Environmental Awareness Program.** Prior to the start of construction, the Qualified Professional Paleontologist or their designee shall conduct a paleontological Worker Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP) training for construction personnel regarding the appearance of fossils and the procedures for notifying paleontological staff should

fossils be discovered by construction personnel to comply with Policy CR9 of the West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Community Plan Implementation Overlay District.

- **Paleontological Monitoring.** Initial part-time monitoring (i.e., spot-checking) shall be conducted for all ground-disturbing activities that reach 6 feet or more below the surface to check for the presence of geologic units of high sensitivity (i.e., Quaternary older alluvium). If such sediments are observed at depth, then full-time monitoring shall be conducted. Paleontological monitoring shall be conducted by a paleontological monitor with experience with collection and salvage of paleontological resources and who meets the minimum standards of the SVP (2010) for a Paleontological Resources Monitor. The Qualified Professional Paleontologist may recommend that monitoring be reduced in frequency or ceased entirely based on geologic observations. Such decisions shall be subject to review and approval by the City of Los Angeles. In the event of a fossil discovery by the paleontological monitor or construction personnel, all construction activity within 50 feet of the find shall cease, and the Qualified Professional Paleontologist shall evaluate the find. If the fossil(s) is (are) not scientifically significant, then construction activity may resume. If it is determined that the fossil(s) is (are) scientifically significant, the following shall be completed:
 - **Fossil Salvage.** The paleontological monitor shall salvage (i.e., excavate and recover) the fossil to protect it from damage/destruction. Typically, fossils can be safely salvaged quickly by a single paleontological monitor with minimal disruption to construction activity. In some cases, larger fossils (such as complete skeletons or large mammal fossils) require more extensive excavation and longer salvage periods. Bulk matrix sampling may be necessary to recover small invertebrates or microvertebrates from within paleontologically sensitive deposits. After the fossil(s) is (are) salvaged, construction activity may resume.
 - **Fossil Preparation and Curation.** Fossils shall be identified to the lowest (i.e., most-specific) possible taxonomic level, prepared to a curation-ready condition, and curated in a scientific institution with a permanent paleontological collection along with all pertinent field notes, photos, data, and maps. Fossils of undetermined significance at the time of collection may also warrant curation at the discretion of the Qualified Professional Paleontologist.
 - **Final Paleontological Mitigation Report.** Upon completion of ground-disturbing activities (or laboratory preparation and curation of fossils, if necessary), the Qualified Professional Paleontologist shall prepare a final report describing the results of the paleontological monitoring efforts. The report shall include a summary of the field and laboratory methods employed; an overview of project geology; and, if fossils were discovered, an analysis of the fossils, including physical description, taxonomic identification, and scientific significance. The report shall be submitted to the City of Los Angeles and, if fossil curation occurred, the designated scientific institution.

7 References

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8 List of Preparers

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