



ADDENDUM TO THE WASHINGTON BOULEVARD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM EIR (SCH No. 2009011027)

(CEQA EXEMPTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT) WASHINGTON BOULEVARD REHABILITATED LANDSCAPE PROJECT COMMERCE, CALIFORNIA



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Washington Boulevard Widening and Reconstruction Project is currently being implemented. The larger Washington Boulevard Improvement Project involves the installation of an additional travel lane in each direction, the rehabilitation of the existing pavement, increasing the turning radius, the installation of landscape medians and parkways, improvement of the railroad crossing west of Commerce Way, upgrading traffic signals/street lighting, improving the storm drain systems, the installation of new curb and gutters, the repair of damaged sidewalks, the installation of ADA-compliant ramps at intersections, and the installation of new trees and directional signage.

This Notice of Exemption (NOE) is concerning the proposed Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project that will be applicable to the Santa Ana Freeway (I-5) and Washington Boulevard ramps. The project will involve the replacement and/or improvement to the existing landscape areas adjacent to the northbound and southbound I-5 ramp connections with Washington Boulevard. Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, a Notice of Exemption (NOE) may be filed if the City of Commerce, in its capacity as the Lead Agency, determines that a proposed action or project is exempt from CEQA. According to the CEQA Guidelines, a NOE must contain the following information:

- A description of the proposed action or project;
- A finding that the proposed action or project is exempt, including a citation of the State CEQA Guidelines section or statute under which the project is found to be exempt; and,
- A brief statement in support of the finding.¹

In addition, this NOE indicates the applicable sections of CEQA that support the findings for the CEQA exemption, and discusses the Lead Agency's findings that are applicable to the proposed project. This NOE also includes a discussion of the environmental impacts that support the NOE's findings for no impacts. This NOE represents the City's independent judgment and position of the City of Commerce, acting as the Lead Agency. The project is being advanced by the City of Commerce.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The City of Commerce retained a landscape architect (David Volz Associates) to prepare landscape plans for those Caltrans-owned right-of-way areas around the Washington Boulevard and I-5 ramp connections. The plans have been prepared and submitted to Caltrans for review as part of the encroachment permit. The City is in the process of executing a landscape maintenance agreement with Caltrans to take over the maintenance of the landscape areas in the ramps. Once Caltrans issues the encroachment permit for the landscaping work, the City will then add this work to the current Washington Boulevard Improvement

¹ CEQA Guidelines California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Article 19. Categorical Exemptions. (Section 15300).



Project as a change order. The current Washington Boulevard Improvement Project already includes the work within Washington Boulevard right-of-way (ROW) adjacent to the ramp areas. Completing the landscaping work (which is behind the street ROW) as part of the overall Washington Boulevard construction activities will translate into a more efficient and cost effective approach to the larger project's implementation, reduce the project's impacts, and reduce the overall project cost.

2.2 PROJECT LOCATION

The project site is located adjacent to the northbound and southbound Washington Boulevard ramp connections with the I-5 Freeway. These ramps are located in the southeastern portion of the City of Commerce. The City of Commerce is located approximately six miles southeast of downtown Los Angeles and is bounded by Montebello on the east; unincorporated East Los Angeles on the north; the cities of Vernon, Bell, and Maywood on the west; and the City of Bell Gardens on the south.² The project area's location in the City is shown in Exhibit 1. An aerial photograph of the project area is provided in Exhibit 2.

2.3 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The affected areas that area located adjacent to the Washington Boulevard and I-5 Freeway Ramps are located within an urban environment. The areas that are located in the landscape plan are surrounded by roadway infrastructure (ramps, Washington Boulevard, and the I-5 Freeway ROW). In addition, the City intends to landscape the median in that portion of Washington Boulevard located to the west of the I-5 Freeway. The land uses found around the intersection include commercial and industrial uses.

2.4 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This Notice of Exemption (NOE) concerns the proposed Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project that will be applicable to the Santa Ana Freeway (I-5) and Washington Boulevard ramps. The project will involve the replacement and/or improvement to the existing landscape areas for those Caltrans-owned properties located adjacent to the northbound and southbound I-5 ramp connections with Washington Boulevard. In addition, the City intends to landscape the median in that portion of Washington Boulevard located to the west of the I-5 Freeway. No ROW acquisition will be required as part of the proposed project's implementation. The affected areas are shown in Exhibits 3 and 4.

3. APPLICABLE CEQA EXEMPTION (CLASS 4 EXEMPTION [MINOR ALTERATIONS TO THE LAND])

The City of Commerce has determined that the proposed project qualifies for a Categorical Exemption. The exemption that is applicable to the project includes a Class 4 exemption. Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes.

² United States Geological Survey. *Los Angeles 7 1/2 Minute Quadrangle*.

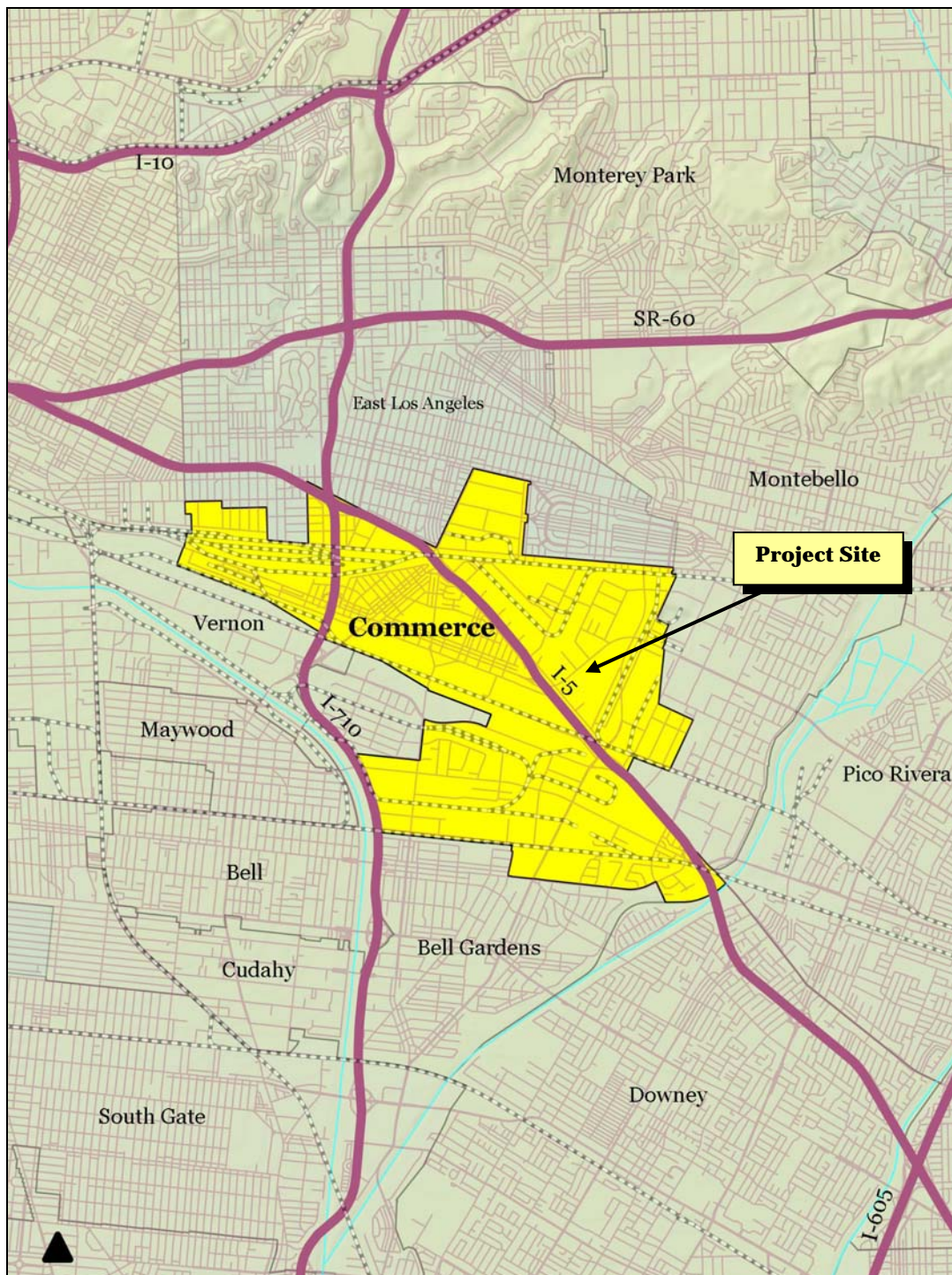


EXHIBIT 1
PROJECT LOCATION IN THE CITY
Source: Quantum GIS

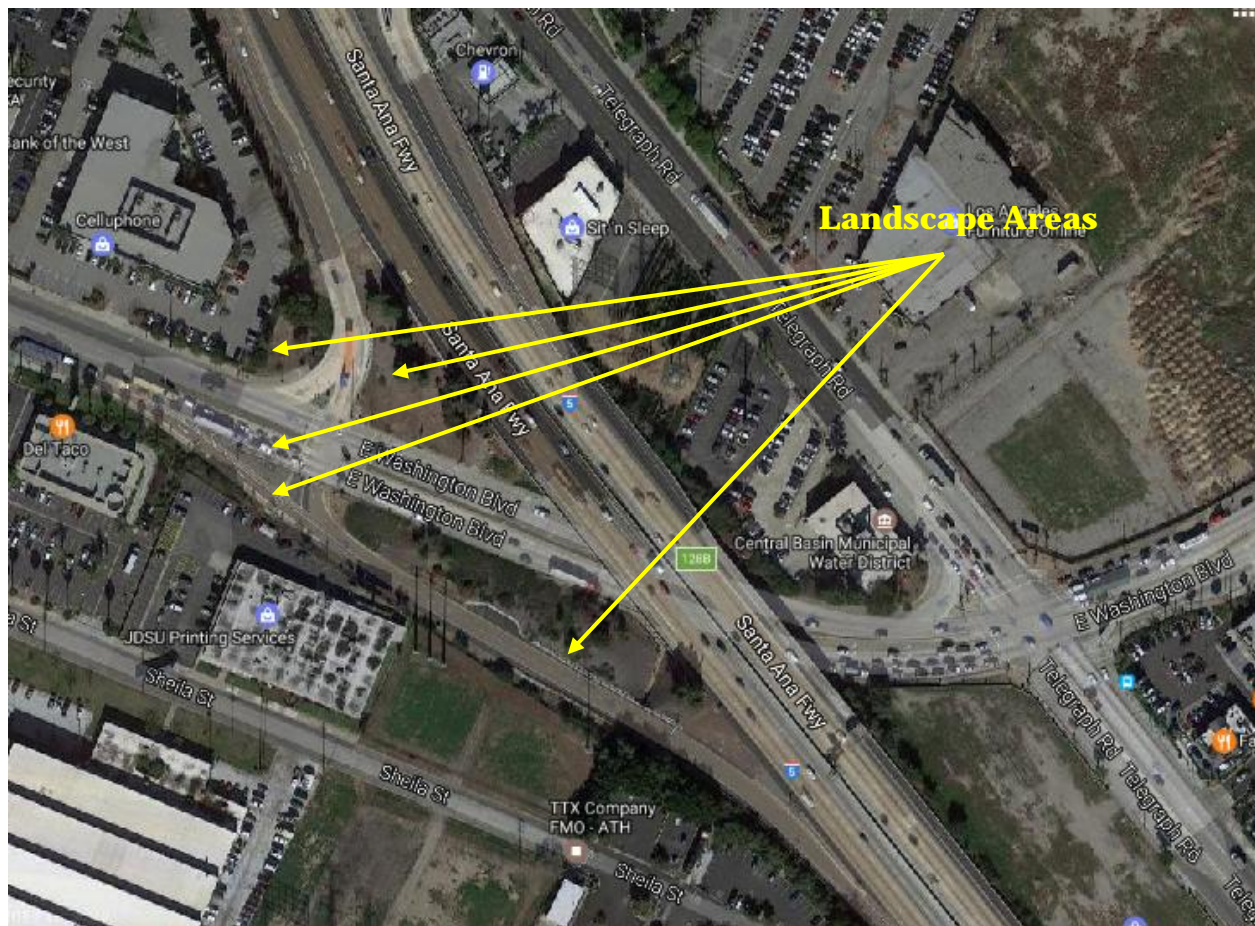


EXHIBIT 2 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH

Source: Google Maps

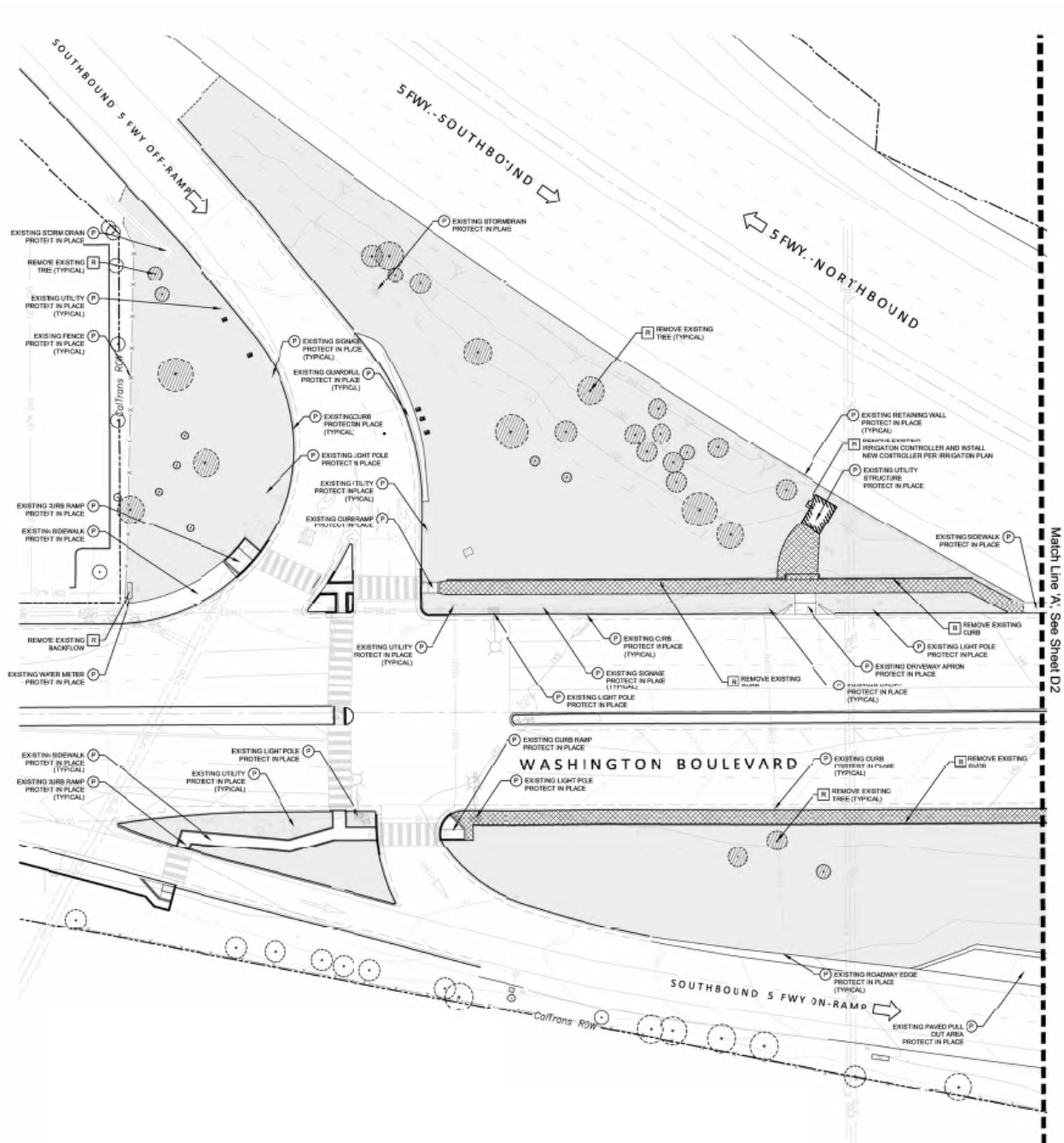


EXHIBIT 3
ILLUSTRATION OF LANDSCAPING PROJECT – WEST PORTION
 Source: David Volz Design

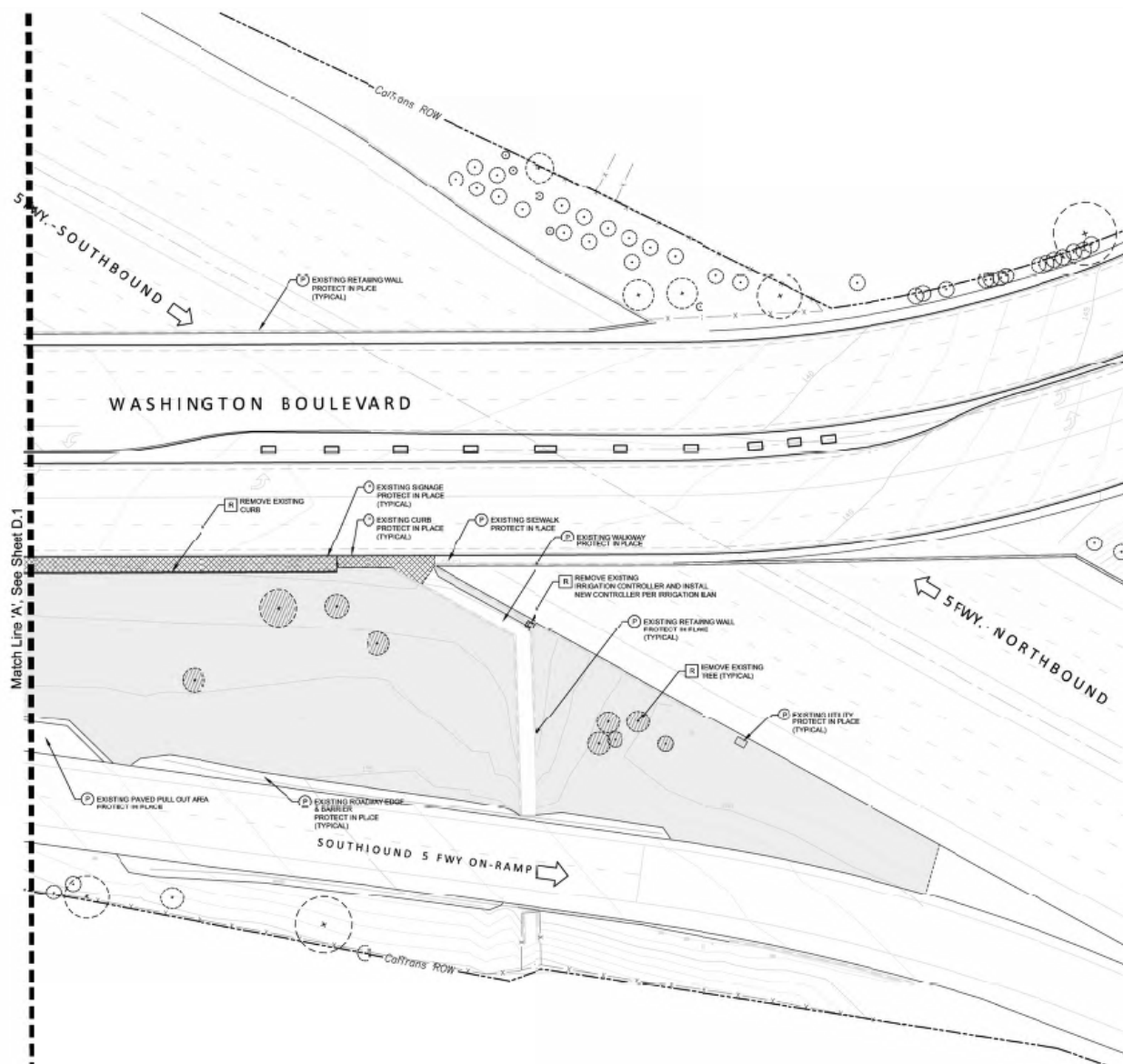


EXHIBIT 4

ILLUSTRATION OF LANDSCAPING PROJECT – EAST PORTION

Source: David Volz Design



Examples of a Class 4 Categorical Exemption that are relevant to the proposed project include the following:

- (Subsection b) New gardening or landscaping, including the replacement of existing conventional landscaping with water efficient or fire resistant landscaping; and,
- (Subsection f) Minor trenching and backfilling where the surface is restored.

4. FINDINGS SUPPORTING THE APPLICABLE CEQA EXEMPTION

The City of Commerce, in its capacity as Lead Agency, was responsible for preparing the original environmental impact report for the Washington Boulevard Improvement Project (SCH No. 2009011027). The City of Commerce is also the public agency that has the primary responsibility for approving the current proposed modifications. Therefore, the City is the Lead Agency that will oversee the evaluation of the potential environmental effects of the current proposed modifications that are the subject of this Addendum. The City of Commerce determined, following a preliminary evaluation of the proposed landscaping program, that the proposed project would not result in any significant effects on the environment. This determination is based on the following findings identified on the following pages.

The EIR prepared for the Washington Boulevard Improvement Project concluded that no significant unavoidable environmental impacts would occur with the implementation of the Washington Boulevard Improvement Project. As indicated herein, the current proposed modifications do not change these conclusions. No new potentially significant impacts or increases to the severity of significant impacts were identified that would change the conclusions contained in the EIR prepared for the Washington Boulevard Improvement Project. Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts from the currently proposed modifications that are described herein, it can be concluded that the currently proposed modifications do not create new significant adverse impacts or increase the severity of significant impacts previously identified in the Washington Boulevard Improvement Project EIR (SCH No. 2009011027). As a result, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15164(a), this document constitutes an Addendum to the Washington Boulevard Improvement Project EIR (SCH No. 2009011027). CEQA Guidelines §15164(a) allows a lead agency to prepare an Addendum to a Final EIR or Negative Declaration if all of the following conditions are met:

- There are no substantial changes with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken that require major revisions to the previous Final EIR prepared for the larger Washington Boulevard Improvement Project due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects.
- No new information becomes available which shows new significant effects or significant effects substantially more severe than previously discussed.



- If new mitigation measures have become available that would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment from the project as originally approved, the project proponent agrees to adopt them.
- Only minor technical changes or additions are necessary to make the Final EIR or Negative Declaration under consideration adequate under CEQA.
- The changes to the Final EIR or Negative Declaration made by the Addendum do not raise important new issues about the significant effects on the environment.

The current proposed modifications will not result in any new significant adverse effects or substantially increased severity of significant effects previously identified in the Washington Boulevard Improvement Project EIR (SCH No. 2009011027). Furthermore, the current proposed modifications will consist of minor changes to the original project that was analyzed in the aforementioned EIR and these changes do not raise important new issues about the previously analyzed environmental effects. Thus, the current proposed modifications meet all of the conditions stated in the CEQA Guidelines §15164(a) for the preparation of an Addendum. Because the currently proposed modifications meet all of the conditions for preparing an Addendum, a subsequent environmental analysis pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15162 is not required.

4.1 LAND USE COMPATIBILITY

The area that is subject to the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project is located within an urban environment. The affected areas that area located adjacent to the Washington Boulevard and I-5 Freeway Ramps are located within an urban environment. The areas that are located in the landscape plan are surrounded by roadway infrastructure (ramps, Washington Boulevard, and the I-5 Freeway ROW). The land uses found around the intersection include commercial and industrial uses. The proposed actions will not involve any new development or a change in land use. The proposed Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project will not involve any new construction that would alter the ROW. No impacts will occur with the implementation of the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project.

4.2 PROJECT SITE SIZE

The land area affected by the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project is located within the City of Commerce. No new land area will be required to implement the proposed project. The affected area is less than five acres that is surrounded by urban land uses. The affected areas that area located adjacent to the Washington Boulevard and I-5 Freeway Ramps are located within an urban environment. The areas that are located in the landscape plan are surrounded by roadway infrastructure (ramps, Washington Boulevard, and the I-5 Freeway ROW). No impacts will occur with the implementation of the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project.



4.3 HABITAT VALUE

The proposed project will involve the implementation of the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project. The affected areas that area located adjacent to the Washington Boulevard and I-5 Freeway Ramps are located within an urban environment. The areas that are located in the landscape plan are surrounded by roadway infrastructure (ramps, Washington Boulevard, and the I-5 Freeway ROW). The area is also isolated from other open space areas. This geographic isolation limits its utility as a habitat or an animal migration corridor. The improvement area's small size and its isolation from other open space areas limit its utility as a habitat or an animal migration corridor. The project site and surrounding areas are not conducive for the survival of any special status species due to the lack of suitable riparian habitat. According to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the site falls under the category of "urban development." No impacts will occur with the implementation of the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project.

4.4 TRAFFIC, NOISE, AIR QUALITY, AND WATER QUALITY

The approval of the proposed Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality. These issue areas are discussed in the subsections that follow.

4.4.1 Traffic

The proposed project will involve the implementation of the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project. The proposed project will involve the implementation of the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project. The affected areas are located adjacent to the Washington Boulevard and I-5 Freeway Ramps. The Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project's activities will not involve any changes to the Washington Boulevard ROW, the ramp connections, or the I-5 Freeway. The Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project will not lead to any additional traffic generation. No impacts will occur with the implementation of the proposed project.

4.4.2 Noise

The project site is located within an urbanized setting and the ambient noise characteristics reflect the surrounding urban environment. The proposed project will involve the implementation of the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project. The affected areas are located adjacent to the Washington Boulevard and I-5 Freeway Ramps. The predominant source of noise in the area is related to traffic on the I-5 Freeway and Washington Boulevard. No noise sensitive receptors are located within 500 feet of the bridge. Limited noise will include noise related to landscaping installation and maintenance activities. Adherence to the City's noise control regulations will mitigate any potential construction noise-related impacts. No impacts will occur with the implementation of the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project.



4.4.3 Air Quality

The air quality impacts associated with the proposed project's implementation may include very limited short-term emissions related to inspection and maintenance activities. No long-term operational emissions will occur. The landscapers will be required to adhere to the regulations set forth by the SCAQMD regarding the mitigation of fugitive dust. No impacts will occur with the implementation of the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project.

4.4.4 Water Quality

The proposed project will involve the implementation of the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project. The affected areas are located adjacent to the Washington Boulevard and I-5 Freeway Ramps. The project will not change the amount of pervious and impervious surfaces located within the project area. As a result, no impacts are anticipated.

4.5 PUBLIC SERVICES

The area that is subject to the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project is located within an urban environment. The proposed project will not involve any new construction that would alter the right-of-way. The project will not result in any adverse impacts to the Los Angeles Fire Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, educational services, or other governmental services. No impacts will occur with the implementation of the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project.

4.6 UTILITIES

The area that is subject to the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project is located within an urban environment. The affected areas are located adjacent to the Washington Boulevard and I-5 Freeway Ramps. The proposed project will not involve any new construction that would alter the right-of-way. No impacts will occur with the implementation of the proposed project.

4.7 ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

Furthermore, the City of Commerce makes the following additional findings in support of a CEQA exemption for the proposed project:

- No dislocation of on-site or off-site structural improvements will be required to accommodate the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project.
- The affected area subject to the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project does not contain any sensitive environmental resources. The surrounding areas have been disturbed as part of the previous development



- The affected area subject to the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project is located within an urbanized area of the City of Commerce. No scenic resources or scenic corridor will be affected by the proposed project (refer to the previous discussion).
- The affected area subject to the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project is not located within an area, nor does it include a site listed on the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) or the Secretary for Environmental Protection as identified as being affected by hazardous wastes (refer to the previous discussion).
- The proposed Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project will not result in any adverse impacts on historic resources.
- The proposed Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project will not require any approvals by a State agency other than the encroachment permits from Caltrans.

Section 15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines (Exceptions) provides conditions under which categorical exemptions are inapplicable. As described in the section below, none of the exceptions apply to the project.

- The affected area subject to the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project is surrounded by urban development. The project area has not been designated as a sensitive or biological site and no sensitive or biological resources have been identified on the lot that will be impacted by the project. The project area does not contain any designated, previously mapped, or officially adopted hazardous or critical concern. Therefore, the project will not have the potential to adversely impact sensitive or biological resources.
- No new development will occur as part of the implementation of the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project. In addition, the project would entail temporary inspection and repair activities within a limited area. Therefore, no cumulative impacts will be expected to result from the proposed project.
- There are no known unusual circumstances associated with the project. Additionally, the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project implementation has been designed and will be implemented in compliance with all relevant regulations and policies that govern freeway ramp connections in order to avoid potentially significant impacts to environmental resources. Therefore, it is not anticipated that the project will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.
- The affected area subject to the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project is fully developed does not contain any scenic rock outcroppings. Lastly, the project site does not contain any buildings listed in the State or National registrar.



- The affected area subject to the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project is located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. The affected area subject to the project is not included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.
- The affected area subject to the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project does not contain any known historic resources. In addition, the project's implementation will not require any grading or earth moving activities.

Based on the analysis provided in this Notice of Exemption, the project meets and complies with the conditions and requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 153304 (Class 4 Exemption) and will not have any significant environmental impacts.

5. DISCUSSION OF LEAD AGENCY'S FINDINGS

The City of Commerce may make the following findings with regard to the proposed project's exemption from the environmental review requirements outlined in CEQA:

- The proposed project will be confined to the affected area subject to the Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project and no dislocation of off-site uses will occur.
- The proposed Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project does not have a possibility of creating any significant environmental effects. The basis for this determination was discussed in the preceding section.
- The proposed Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project will not result in any impacts to sensitive resources.
- The proposed Washington Boulevard Rehabilitated Landscape Project will not result in any cumulative impacts; have the potential for damaging scenic resources; involve the placement of a project over a site the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and the Secretary for Environmental Protection has identified as being affected by hazardous waste; or result in any impacts on historic resources.³

City of Commerce

Date

³ Guidelines for the Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, Article 5. § 15061(b)(3).