

# CITY OF LOS ANGELES

CALIFORNIA



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MAYOR

February 24, 2014

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City Council  
Room No. 395  
City Hall

Subject: BENDING THE RIVER BACK INTO THE CITY (PROJECT) CALIFORNIA  
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) COMPLIANCE


As recommended in the accompanying report of the City Engineer, which this Board has adopted, the Board of Public Works recommends that the City Council consider and approve the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, which finds that the project will not cause significant environmental impacts; and also:

1. Review and consider the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration;
2. Find that, although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made or agreed to by the project component;
3. Adopt the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and the Mitigation Monitoring Program.

### FISCAL IMPACT

The project is privately funded. There will be no impact on the General Fund.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Arleen P. Taylor, Executive Officer  
Board of Public Works

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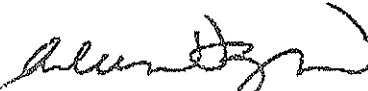


Department of Public Works

Bureau of Engineering  
Report No. 1

February 24, 2014  
CD No. 1

ADOPTED BY THE BOARD  
PUBLIC WORKS OF THE CITY  
of Los Angeles California  
AND REFERRED TO THE CITY COUNCIL  
FEB 24 2014



Executive Officer

**BENDING THE RIVER BACK INTO THE CITY (PROJECT) CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) COMPLIANCE**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Consider the CEQA Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND), which finds that the Project will not cause significant environmental impacts.
2. Upon adoption of this report, forward it with the following recommendations to the City Council for consideration and approval:
  - a. Review and consider the IS/MND for the Project.
  - b. Find that, although the proposed Project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the Project have been made or agreed to by the Project proponent.
  - c. Adopt the IS/MND and the Mitigation Monitoring Program contained therein.

**FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

The Project is privately funded. There will be no impact on the General Fund.

**TRANSMITTAL**

IS/MND dated January, 2014.

**DISCUSSION**

***Background***

The Project applicant, Metabolic Studio, desires to create a project that reintegrates the City with the Los Angeles River, its historic source of water. Under the proposed project, funded by the applicant, a water wheel would be constructed near the former site of the original water wheel constructed in the 1850s to lift water from the river to the *Zanja Madre* (Mother Ditch), the original aqueduct that brought water to the Pueblo de Los Angeles from the River.

The project is consistent with the goals of the City's *Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan* (C.F. 07-1342). It realizes the following recommendations included in the Master Plan:

- Identify physical opportunities to improve the visibility of the River Corridor;
- Identify opportunities to improve public perception of the River Corridor;
- Encourage local and diverse character within the River Corridor; and
- Identify physical opportunities to introduce art along the River.

### ***Project Description***

"Bending the River Back into the City" is a private project to construct and operate a water wheel adjacent to the Los Angeles River at 1796 N. Baker Street. The site is about 0.4 miles west of the Golden State Freeway, about 0.8 miles east of Dodger Stadium, and about 2 miles north of downtown Los Angeles. The property is currently owned by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro). Metabolic Studio intends to purchase the property.

Metabolic Studio's intent is to physically divert water from the river and create an aesthetic and educational statement, showing that the river can be used as a source of water once again. Additional purposes include enhancing connections between the surrounding community and the river; and providing a viable long-term non-potable irrigation water source for the State Park and other local demands.

The proposed water wheel, loosely modeled after the historic wheel that existed near the project location, would be about 70 feet in diameter and its hub would be at the existing ground level over a 35-foot deep pit excavated to house and support the water wheel. An inflatable dam would be installed in the river to impound and divert water to a pipe feeding the water wheel pit. A small fraction of the river's water will be lifted by the wheel, filtered, disinfected and used for non-potable irrigation. The remainder of the water will be returned to the river downstream from the inflatable dam.

### ***Bureau of Engineering (BOE) Acting as CEQA Lead***

The proposed project site is currently owned by Metro, and Metro could have assumed the CEQA lead agency role. However, Metro has designated the BOE to be the lead agency for the purpose of satisfying the requirements of CEQA and Metro has agreed to be a CEQA "responsible agency."

### ***Initial Study***

An Initial Study determined that the proposed project could adversely affect biological resources, seismic safety, cultural resources, and water quality (Transmittal). However, a Mitigation Monitoring Program has been developed and incorporated into the IS/MND to address these effects.

Because the Project would not result in the removal of any trees or construction activities in close proximity to the trees, the project will not impact any City of Los

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Angeles protected trees. However, the study area also contains vegetation and structures that provide suitable nesting habitat for a variety of nesting birds including raptors and passerines. Mitigation would offset potential indirect or direct impacts on special-status species or resources and ensure that the impacts on special-status biological resources would be less than significant.

A geotechnical investigation found a potential for isolated soil liquefaction during a seismic event. The geotechnical report concluded that mitigation would reduce potential impacts to less than significant.

No archaeological or other unique cultural resources are known to exist on the site. If any items of archaeological, paleontological, or cultural significance are discovered during construction, applicable laws, regulations, and mitigation measures would avoid any significant impacts.

Construction would be in and adjacent to the river channel. Consequently, there is a potential for siltation and sedimentation in the river channel from earthwork associated with construction. Mitigation has been identified that reduce risks to water quality from project construction to a less-than-significant level.

The Initial Study concludes that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made or agreed to by the project proponent. Therefore it is recommended that a Mitigated Negative Declaration be adopted.

### ***Public Review***

The proposed IS/MND was circulated for public review and comment from October 14, 2013 to November 14, 2013. A notice of intent/availability was published in the Los Angeles Times on Thursday, October 17, 2013. A notice of intent/availability was mailed to interested parties and to owners and occupants of properties adjacent to the proposed project site. The notice was also filed with the City Clerk, Los Angeles County Clerk, and the California State Clearinghouse. The IS/MND was available for review at the Chinatown Branch Library, on-line at the BOE website, or by calling the Environmental Management Group.

Four comment letters were received and are included in the final IS/MND. No new significant environmental impacts or issues were raised during the comment period.

### ***Project Schedule***

The above recommended actions are necessary steps in project review and approval. Metabolic Studio's project schedule anticipates final CEQA action by March 1, 2014.

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( JED CSA RMK SP )

Report reviewed by:

BOE (ADM and LAR)

Report prepared by:

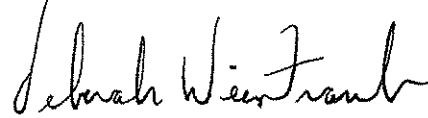
Environmental Management Group

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Environmental Affairs Officer  
Phone No. (213) 485-5759

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Questions regarding this report  
may be referred to:  
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Respectfully submitted,



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Interim City Engineer