

**Notice of Completion & Environmental Document Transmittal**

Mail to: State Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 3044, Sacramento, CA 95812-3044 (916) 445-0613  
 For Hand Delivery/Street Address: 1400 Tenth Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

SCH #

**Project Title:** Descanso Gardens Master Plan**Lead Agency:** Los Angeles County**Contact Person:** Julie Yom**Mailing Address:** 1000 S. Fremont Avenue Unit #40, A-9 West, Third Floor**Phone:** (626) 588-5311**City:** Alhambra**Zip:** 91803**County:** Los Angeles**Project Location:** County: Los Angeles

City/Nearest Community: La Cañada Flintridge

Cross Streets: Descanso Drive

Zip Code: 91011

Longitude/Latitude (degrees, minutes and seconds): W118 ° 12 ' 40.38 " N / 34 ° 12 ' 5.115 " W Total Acres: 149

Assessor's Parcel No.: 5813-008-006, 5813-008-010, 5813-008-002, 5813-008-003, 5813-008-004

Section: 2 and 35 Twp.: 1 N &amp; 2N Range: 13 West Base: SBB&amp;M

Within 2 Miles: State Hwy #: SR-2, I-210

Waterways: Winery Canyon Channel, Flint Canyon Wash, Arroyo Seco, Verdugo Wash

Airports: None

Railways: None

Schools: See Attachment A.1

**Document Type:**CEQA: ☐ NOP☐ Draft EIRNEPA: ☐ NOIOther: ☐ Joint Document☐ Early Cons☐ Supplement/Subsequent EIR☐ EA☐ Final Document☐ Neg Dec

(Prior SCH No.) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Draft EIS☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_☒ Mit Neg Dec

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ FONSI**Local Action Type:**☐ General Plan Update☐ Specific Plan☐ Rezone☐ Annexation☐ General Plan Amendment☒ Master Plan☐ Prezone☐ Redevelopment☐ General Plan Element☐ Planned Unit Development☐ Use Permit☐ Coastal Permit☐ Community Plan☐ Site Plan☐ Land Division (Subdivision, etc.)☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_**Development Type:**☐ Residential: Units \_\_\_\_\_ Acres \_\_\_\_\_☐ Office: Sq.ft. \_\_\_\_\_ Acres \_\_\_\_\_ Employees \_\_\_\_\_☐ Commercial: Sq.ft. \_\_\_\_\_ Acres \_\_\_\_\_ Employees \_\_\_\_\_☐ Industrial: Sq.ft. \_\_\_\_\_ Acres \_\_\_\_\_ Employees \_\_\_\_\_☐ Educational: \_\_\_\_\_☒ Recreational: Botanical Garden☐ Water Facilities: Type \_\_\_\_\_ MGD \_\_\_\_\_☐ Transportation: Type \_\_\_\_\_☐ Mining: Mineral \_\_\_\_\_☐ Power: Type \_\_\_\_\_ MW \_\_\_\_\_☐ Waste Treatment: Type \_\_\_\_\_ MGD \_\_\_\_\_☐ Hazardous Waste: Type \_\_\_\_\_☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_**Project Issues Discussed in Document:**☒ Aesthetic/Visual☐ Fiscal☒ Recreation/Parks☒ Vegetation☒ Agricultural Land☐ Flood Plain/Flooding☒ Schools/Universities☒ Water Quality☒ Air Quality☒ Forest Land/Fire Hazard☒ Septic Systems☒ Water Supply/Groundwater☒ Archeological/Historical☒ Geologic/Seismic☐ Sewer Capacity☒ Wetland/Riparian☒ Biological Resources☒ Minerals☐ Soil Erosion/Compaction/Grading☒ Growth Inducement☐ Coastal Zone☒ Noise☒ Solid Waste☒ Land Use☒ Drainage/Absorption☒ Population/Housing Balance☒ Toxic/Hazardous☐ Cumulative Effects☐ Economic/Jobs☒ Public Services/Facilities☒ Traffic/Circulation☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_**Present Land Use/Zoning/General Plan Designation:**

Botanical Garden/Public Facilities and Open Space Zones/Open Space General Plan designation

**Project Description:** (please use a separate page if necessary)

Please see Attachment A.2.

Note: The State Clearinghouse will assign identification numbers for all new projects. If a SCH number already exists for a project (e.g. Notice of Preparation or previous draft document) please fill in.

## Reviewing Agencies Checklist

Lead Agencies may recommend State Clearinghouse distribution by marking agencies below with an "X".  
If you have already sent your document to the agency please denote that with an "S".

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Air Resources Board                            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Office of Historic Preservation          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boating & Waterways, Department of             | <input type="checkbox"/> Office of Public School Construction                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> California Emergency Management Agency         | <input type="checkbox"/> Parks & Recreation, Department of                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> California Highway Patrol                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Pesticide Regulation, Department of                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caltrans District # _____                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Utilities Commission                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caltrans Division of Aeronautics               | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional WQCB # _____                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caltrans Planning                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Resources Agency                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Central Valley Flood Protection Board          | <input type="checkbox"/> Resources Recycling and Recovery, Department of     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coachella Valley Mtns. Conservancy             | <input type="checkbox"/> S.F. Bay Conservation & Development Comm.           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coastal Commission                             | <input type="checkbox"/> San Gabriel & Lower L.A. Rivers & Mtns. Conservancy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Colorado River Board                           | <input type="checkbox"/> San Joaquin River Conservancy                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation, Department of                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Santa Monica Mtns. Conservancy                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corrections, Department of                     | <input type="checkbox"/> State Lands Commission                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Delta Protection Commission                    | <input type="checkbox"/> SWRCB: Clean Water Grants                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education, Department of                       | <input type="checkbox"/> SWRCB: Water Quality                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energy Commission                              | <input type="checkbox"/> SWRCB: Water Rights                                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fish & Game Region # _____          | <input type="checkbox"/> Tahoe Regional Planning Agency                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food & Agriculture, Department of              | <input type="checkbox"/> Toxic Substances Control, Department of             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forestry and Fire Protection, Department of    | <input type="checkbox"/> Water Resources, Department of                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Services, Department of                |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Services, Department of                 | Other: _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing & Community Development                | Other: _____   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Native American Heritage Commission |  |

### Local Public Review Period (to be filled in by lead agency)

Starting Date January 27, 2020

Ending Date February 26, 2020

### Lead Agency (Complete if applicable):

Consulting Firm: Sapphos Environmental, Inc.

Address: 430 North Halstead Street

City/State/Zip: Pasadena, CA 91107

Contact: Laura Male

Phone: (626) 683-3547

Applicant: Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation

Address: 1000 S. Fremont Avenue Unit #40, A-9 West, Third Floor

City/State/Zip: Alhambra, CA 91803

Phone: (626) 588-5311

Signature of Lead Agency Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 1/20/2020

Authority cited: Section 21083, Public Resources Code. Reference: Section 21161, Public Resources Code.

## ATTACHMENT

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### A.1 Schools within a Two-Mile Radius of Master Plan Area

1. Rosemont Middle School
2. Mountain Avenue Elementary School
3. Palm Crest Elementary School
4. La Crescenta Elementary School
5. Los Angeles County Online High School
6. La Cañada Elementary School
7. Paradise Canyon Elementary School
8. John C. Fremont Elementary School
9. La Cañada High School
10. Verdugo Woodlands Elementary School
11. Robbin's Nest Preschool
12. Montrose Christian Montessori School
13. Holy Redeemer Catholic School
14. Armenian Sisters Academy
15. Hogg's Hollow Pre-School and Kindergarten
16. La Cañada Preparatory School
17. St. George's Pre-School
18. Foothill Progressive School
19. Flintridge Preparatory School
20. St. Bede the Venerable Elementary School
21. St. Francis High School
22. Hillside School and Learning Center
23. Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy
24. Valley Vista School

### A.2 Project Description

The County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation proposes to adopt a comprehensive 15-year Master Plan (proposed project) to guide the development of Descanso Gardens (Master Plan Area) between 2020 and 2035. Descanso Gardens is one of the four botanic gardens/arborescences of Los Angeles County's park system. The Master Plan Area is an approximately 149-acre property located in the City of La Cañada Flintridge adjacent to the eastern City of Glendale boundary, within the Fifth Supervisorial District of Los Angeles County, approximately 11 miles north of the Los Angeles Civic Center. The Master Plan Area is located in the San Rafael and La Cañada Land Grants of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute Pasadena topographic quadrangle in Township 1 North, Range 13 West, Section 2; and Township 2 North, Range 13 West, Section 35 (Figure 1, *Topographic Map with USGS 7.5-Minute Quadrangle Index*).

The Master Plan would act as a framework to guide new development within a 15-year timeframe and recommend improvements to existing gardens, seeking to provide implementable projects that would sustain operations. The Master Plan would include recommendations for improving the quality of Descanso Gardens, a County special use park facility, in the West San Gabriel Valley Planning Area, the Fifth Supervisorial District, and Los Angeles County. There are four overarching master plan strategies and tactics for the proposed Master Plan:

1. **A New Circulation Framework** to improve wayfinding, create gateway moments at garden thresholds, and increase accessibility. The proposed project would restructure the hierarchy of existing paths and provide additional paths to help improve visitor orientation and better showcase garden stories and experiences, guide visitors through the gardens instead of around the gardens, separate the visitor experience from maintenance routes, organize site amenities, and strategically distribute utilities (power and water). The circulation framework improvements would focus on five primary circulation routes: a 0.2-mile arrival procession, a 0.8-mile Gardens Loop, a 0.7-mile Woodland Walk, a 0.6-mile Nature Walk with an additional 0.5-mile Wilds Loop extension and a 0.2-mile Elevated Canopy Walk, and a 1.7-mile Service Route. The paved Service Route would be a minimum 20-foot width in order to provide adequate fire/emergency access. Approximately 85 percent of the existing path network at Descanso Gardens would remain as-is or be resurfaced for ADA accessibility. Approximately 15 percent of the circulation network would involve development of new paths.
2. **Activating the Gardens** with new and improved gardens and facilities to create new experiences and lasting activation of the gardens. The proposed project would include the development of two new gardens (Marsh Garden and Nature Discovery Garden), a new nursery and storage yard, one new temporary overflow parking area, major improvements to 11 existing gardens, and improvements to the entrance complex and the two existing parking lots. The Rose Garden would be redesigned by consolidating the flower beds for maintenance and “WOW factor.” The 2,470 camellias in excellent, good, and fair conditions would be consolidated from a 9-acre area to a 3-acre area in development of the Camellia Strolling Gardens. This consolidated camellia collection garden would reorganize the layout to facilitate maintenance and ensure maximum visibility. Furthermore, existing camellias that are too close to oak root zones would be transplanted, and the oak understory would be restored where camellias have been removed. Additional lighting would be provided to support evening events in the Japanese Garden. The area of the Ancient Forest collection would be expanded, with new specimens to bolster the collection and new pathways to meander through the garden. An improved boardwalk circulation would be installed around and across the Lake, and an observation deck would be installed from Boddy Lodge. An immersive walk among the oak canopy in the existing Camellia Forest – East would provide ADA access to the Boddy House. The native plant collection in the California Native Gardens would be expanded.

The Main Parking Lot would be redesigned and expanded to provide a new arrival garden between the reconfigured rows of parking stalls. The layout of the existing Auxiliary Parking Lot would be reconfigured to provide drop-off and parking for group arrivals and private events, including a widened entry road and bridge crossing at the Southern California Edison (SCE) utility corridor (to accommodate large trucks and buses) and an expansion of the striped parking spaces. The proposed project would increase the existing number of available parking stalls by 32 percent (184 stalls) from 574 existing parking stalls to 758 proposed parking stalls to accommodate projected visitor use. Additionally, the SCE utility corridor would be graded to provide temporary overflow parking for up to 70 vehicles during events to reduce potential overflow parking in the surrounding neighborhood. The increased number of parking spaces would bolster Descanso Gardens’ capacity to meet existing parking

needs and reduce the occurrence of street parking by existing visitors during peak periods (events).

3. **Weaving Water and Ecology** to intersect the site's water and ecology with the gardens and circulation in celebratory, educational, and performative ways. The proposed Master Plan would include stormwater capture and treatment improvements to enhance the ecological performance of main water features and optimize the Lake for stormwater capture for nonpotable use. In addition, Low Impact Development (LID) best management practices would be installed per the County's LID ordinance. These features include harvesting stormwater from Winery Creek Channel for treatment in the Marsh Garden, installed wetlands around the Lake edge, a bioswale in the picnic grove, and recirculation of water using pumps from the Marsh Garden to the Lake in the winter.

Exclusion fencing around the perimeter of the ticketed entry area would be improved and upgraded to protect the developed garden and removed to allow for a wildlife corridor in the undeveloped portions of the property. The Master Plan proposes improvements to existing fencing including shoring up the existing perimeter fence along the southern and southwestern edges of the ticketed entry portion of the Master Plan Area to improve deer exclusion functionality, replacing existing fencing along the northern and eastern edges of the ticketed entry portion of the Master Plan Area with a decorative garden security fence, and removing the existing fencing northwest of the ticketed entry area to allow for increased wildlife movement in the San Rafael Hills.

4. **Organizing Operations** with new buildings, structures, and infrastructure to create new efficiencies in garden operations and vehicular circulation. A new approximately 10,500-square-foot administrative center would replace five existing administrative office trailers, supported by staff parking, electric vehicle charging stations, a new approximately 1,500-square-foot multipurpose meeting room, and an operations staging area. The existing Rose Pavilion and cottage in the Rose Garden would be replaced with a new approximately 9,200-square-foot Meeting Pavilion and Event Terrace near the western edge of the garden, and the lawn would be consolidated into a centrally located Gathering Lawn that would accommodate large programs with better access and infrastructure than the existing Main Lawn.

Critical infrastructure upgrades would support existing programs (such as Enchanted: Forest of Light) and new programs at Descanso Gardens without requiring major temporary equipment rentals. The Master Plan proposes installation of new infrastructure (lighting, electricity, and Wi-Fi) to provide maximum flexibility for Descanso Gardens to curate new programs and installations, including permanent power hookups to support existing and future programming without temporary generators, on-site energy production to expand Descanso Gardens' use of renewable energy sources, new lighting along pathways and in event areas to support and enable nighttime programming, and consideration of flexible lighting design for installations (such as Enchanted) and programmable lighting elements that can be used by lighting designers to create special effects.

To refine programs and events at Descanso Gardens, the proposed project would involve upgrades to event centers, the Boddy Lodge & Lake Terrace, the Boddy House

& Sturt Haaga Gallery, and Van de Kamp Hall. Event spaces would be repositioned along the perimeter of the gardens to improve service access for set-up and take-down and minimize interruption to the general visitors' experience. To refine operations activities at Descanso Gardens, the proposed project would involve upgrades to the existing Visitor Center, five-trailer Administrative Headquarters complex, Nursery & Maintenance Areas, and parking in the Master Plan Area. Several new restrooms would be installed in the developed portions of the gardens, including staff restrooms at the Administrative Headquarters and Boddy House, and public restrooms at Nature Discovery Zone, Rose Garden, and Minka. All new buildings and structures would be one story tall.



