



NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING



- DATE:** February 14, 2022
- TO:** Governor’s Office of Planning and Research State Clearinghouse, Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties
- LEAD AGENCY:** County of Los Angeles
- PROJECT PROPONENT:** Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History Foundation
900 Exposition Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90007
- SUBJECT:** Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Notice of Public Scoping Meeting for the **Proposed La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan Project**

The County of Los Angeles (County) is the lead agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan Project (project). The County has prepared this notice of preparation (NOP) to provide responsible agencies, trustee agencies, organizations, and other interested parties with information describing the project and to identify the project’s probable environmental effects pursuant to State of California requirements. The County seeks input from responsible agencies, trustee agencies, other affected public agencies, the public, and others regarding the scope and contents of the EIR.

The La Brea Tar Pits and the George C. Page Museum (Page Museum), located in portions of the 23-acre Hancock Park, including buildings, facilities, recreation areas, and the tar pits, are owned by the County but are managed by the non-profit Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History Foundation (Foundation). The Foundation’s role is to carry out all County services including public access and programming, administration, and operation of the Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County (NHMLAC), including the La Brea Tar Pits and Page Museum.

PROJECT LOCATION AND OVERVIEW

As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan property (project site) is located at 5801 Wilshire Boulevard in the Miracle Mile neighborhood of Los Angeles. The 13-acre project site occupies the eastern and northeastern portions of the 23-acre Hancock Park. The project site broadly encompasses what is known as the La Brea Tar Pits, which includes the Page Museum; the physical tar pit features located within the Hancock Park grounds, some of which are

research sites; the concession and public restroom building; a multipurpose lawn, recreation areas, and landscaped features throughout the park; and a surface parking lot.

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) is adjacent to the project site and also partially within Hancock Park; LACMA's facilities are not included in the project.

The La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan site is bounded by Wilshire Boulevard to the south, West Sixth Street to the north, South Curson Avenue to the east, and LACMA to the west. Also located to the west and just beyond LACMA's facilities are the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures and South Fairfax Avenue.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project would renovate the existing Page Museum and add a new one-story museum building toward the northwest, increasing the total museum square footage from 63,000 gross square feet (gsf) to 105,000 gsf (Figure 3). The new museum building would include a lobby and exhibit spaces, two theaters, a mechanical equipment room, research and collections rooms, administration spaces, and a loading dock.

The renovation of the Page Museum would remove the vegetation in the existing central atrium and improve the facility to allow for additional exhibition, classroom, and laboratory spaces. The renovation would also allow much of the collection space to be reorganized and enlarged to provide better display of the collections to the public. As part of the project, a café could be added to the outdoor terrace on the western side of the Page Museum.

The existing parking lot would be shifted to the northeast. However, it is not anticipated that there would be a substantial change in the amount of parking provided. The project would add new landscaping and vehicle access lanes to the parking lot, with an additional pedestrian entrance to the museum leading from the parking lot. A new 2,000-gsf support building would be constructed for additional exhibit, presentation, storage, administration, and research space directly west of the parking lot.

The project would add the following improvements to Hancock Park: a pedestrian path (improving pedestrian circulation within the project site), additional seating and rest areas, a Wilshire Gateway entry plaza at the southeastern corner of the site, a 6th Street Gateway entry plaza at the northwestern corner of the site, a pedestrian bridge over the Lake Pit, three pavilions with canopies, and new and enhanced recreation areas. Enhanced landscaping would also be provided, including native vegetation plantings and a garden bioswale to improve stormwater infiltration.

The phasing and the timing of construction to be proposed is currently under study by the NHMLAC and will be further detailed in the EIR. However, it is expected that construction would be completed in approximately 7 to 10 years. Construction activity is not anticipated to occur consistently over this duration, but rather would

be phased as funding becomes available. Limiting construction impacts to the community will be an important consideration in the determination of the final construction plan.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

Based on a preliminary review of the proposed project and consistent with Section 15060(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, the County has determined that a comprehensive EIR will be prepared for the project. Therefore, all of the topics identified in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines (the initial study checklist) will undergo study in the EIR.

The environmental effects to be analyzed in the EIR will include, but are not limited to, the following:

Transportation: A transportation impact analysis will be prepared for the EIR to describe the existing local and regional transportation network and to evaluate the proposed project's construction-related and operations-related traffic impacts for vehicular, transit, bike, and pedestrian circulation. The EIR will analyze whether the project would conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadways, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. The project's impacts to traffic and transportation and their level of significance will be assessed in detail in the EIR.

Paleontological Resources: Hancock Park and the La Brea Tar Pits were designated as a National Natural Landmark in 1962, due to the world-famous asphalt tar pits and because of the site's important history related to Pleistocene animal fossils. The site is recognized for having the largest and most diverse assemblage of extinct plants and animals in the world and continues to support active discovery and research related to the asphalt tar pits. Subsurface paleontological resources could be discovered during construction of project components, particularly during excavation for construction of the new museum building. The potential for impacts to paleontological resources will be evaluated in the EIR and appropriate discovery and treatment measures will be developed and presented in the EIR.

Cultural Resources: The EIR will provide an assessment of the potential effects of the project on cultural resources. The EIR will include an inventory of archaeological, historic, and culturally sensitive resources and will describe the potential for cultural resources to be adversely impacted during construction or operation of project components, particularly during excavation for the construction of the new museum building. Consideration will be given to the potential for effects on the historic sensitivity of the project site and its features. Specifically, Hancock Park and the La Brea Tar Pits were designated as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

Tribal Cultural Resources: In accordance with Assembly Bill 52 (Government Code Section 65352.4), the Native American Heritage Commission and any tribes it identifies will be contacted and consulted about the presence of traditional lands or cultural places in the proposed project vicinity; potential impacts to tribal cultural resources will be identified in the EIR.

Air Quality: Construction of the project would generate emissions from construction equipment exhaust, earth movement, construction workers' commutes, and material hauling. The EIR will provide an estimate of construction-related emissions as well as long-term operational emissions of project components. The EIR will also provide an evaluation of the project's consistency with regional air quality attainment plans and the potential health impacts associated with project construction and operation emissions to local and regional sensitive receptors.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions: The EIR will provide a quantification of greenhouse gas emissions associated with proposed construction and operation in terms of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions. The estimated greenhouse gas emissions will be compared to regional thresholds of significance and impacts will be identified. The proposed project's consistency with the County's Community Climate Action Plan and other applicable plans will also be addressed.

Noise: The EIR will identify sensitive noise receptors and sources of noise and vibration in the project area and will analyze short-term construction and long-term operational noise and vibration impacts, where feasible. The construction analysis will use established modeling methods (e.g., the Federal Highway Administration Roadway Construction Noise Model and the Federal Transit Administration Noise and Vibration Manual). The EIR will provide an analysis of the project's potential to generate substantial temporary or permanent increases in ambient noise levels near the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance or applicable standards of other agencies.

Geology and Soils: The EIR will provide an analysis of geologic hazards, including the potential for seismic hazards, such as rupture of a known earthquake fault, seismic ground shaking, or seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction, landslides, substantial erosion or the loss of topsoil, lateral spreading, subsidence, collapse, and expansive soils.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials: The project site is not located on a list of hazardous waste sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 (i.e., the Cortese List). However, further analysis of hazardous materials will occur to support the EIR. The EIR will describe the existing hazardous materials conditions on and adjacent to the project site, including the potential for existing soil or groundwater contamination, and will identify hazardous impacts from both construction and operations. Specifically, the EIR will analyze whether the project

would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials.

NOTICE OF SCOPING MEETING

The County will conduct two virtual public scoping meetings to solicit oral and written comments from interested parties as to the appropriate scope and content of the EIR.

All interested parties are invited to attend one of the scoping meetings to assist with identifying issues to be addressed in the EIR. Both scoping meetings will include a brief presentation of the project to be addressed in the EIR and will provide attendees with an opportunity to provide input on the scope of the EIR. Each scoping meeting will provide the same presentation. Participants that register will be able to join either meeting. The following meeting start times are available:

- **Wednesday, March 2, 2022, 2:30 p.m.**
- **Wednesday, March 2, 2022, 5:30 p.m.**

To join at either of these times, please register at the following link to receive the Zoom connection information:

https://swca.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_LqiNknH7StmHTjCCZAP0Yg

Live language interpretation of the presentation and scoping meeting input will be provided in Spanish and Korean during the scoping meeting. Interpretation in other languages can be made available at the meeting upon request. Please submit interpretation requests at least 7 business days in advance of the meeting date to Richard Hayden at reimagine@tarpits.org.

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD

The County has made this NOP available for public review and comment pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(b). The County is seeking input from public agencies and members of the public on the intended scope and contents of the environmental information and analysis in the EIR. Due to the time limits mandated by state law, written comments must be sent via United States Postal Service or email within 30 days, postmarked or emailed no later than **5:30 p.m. Pacific Time on Wednesday, March 16, 2022.**

Any comments provided should identify specific topics of environmental concern and the reason for suggesting the study of these topics in the EIR. All comments will be considered in defining the scope of the EIR in accordance with State and County environmental guidelines.

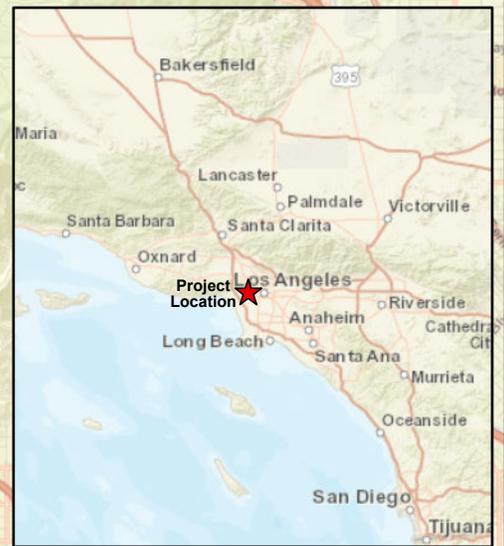
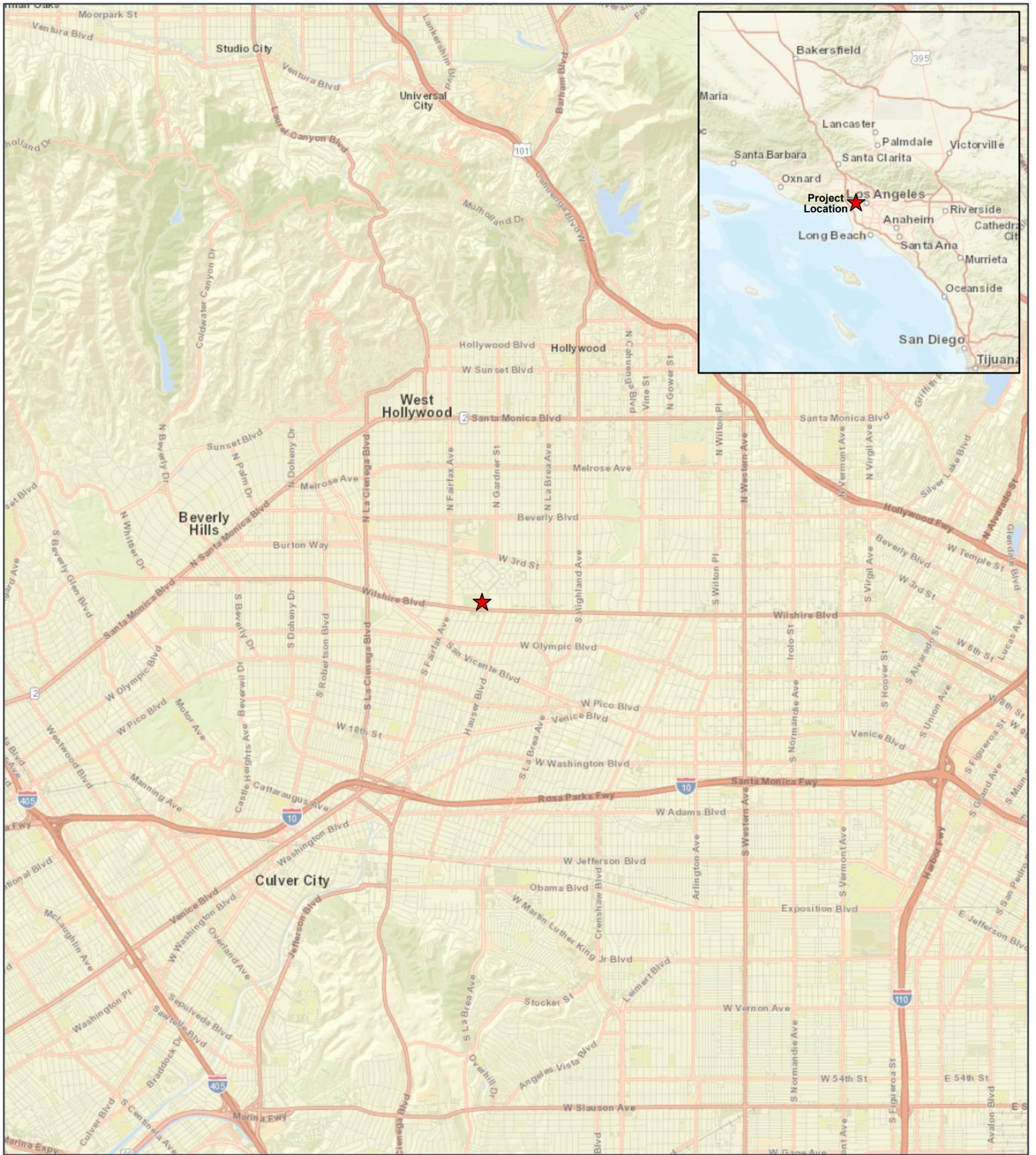
Please direct all written comments to the following address:

Richard Hayden, Assistant Deputy Director
Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County
900 Exposition Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90007
reimagine@tarpits.org

DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY

This NOP and additional information regarding the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan Project is available for review at tarpits.org/reimagine

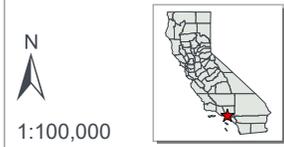
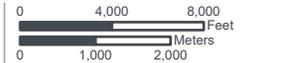
Thank you for your participation in the environmental review of this project.



LA BREA TAR PITS MASTER PLAN
Vicinity Map
Figure 1

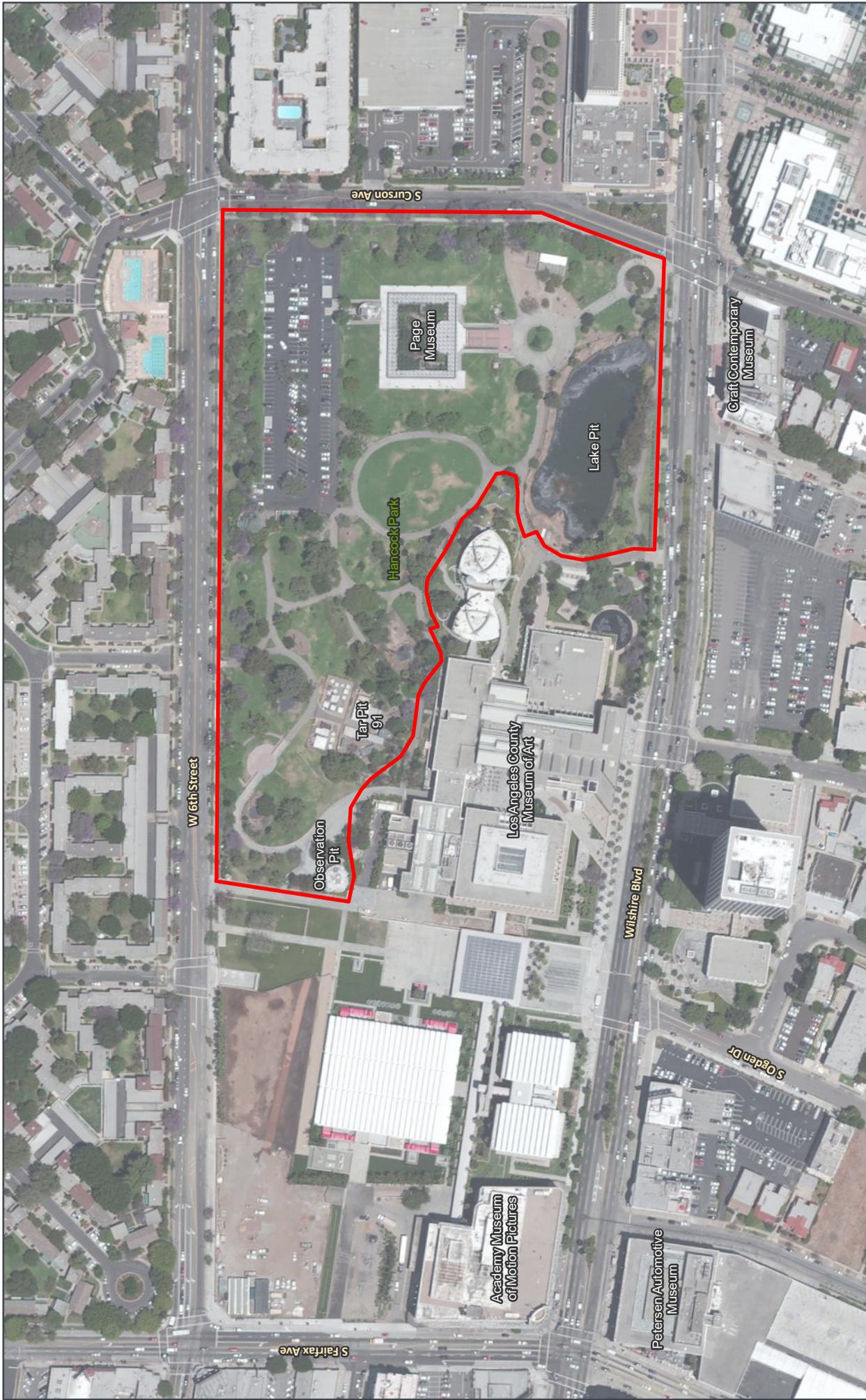
★ Project Location

Los Angeles County, CA
WGS 1984 Web Mercator
Auxiliary Sphere
34.067°N 118.3497°W



Base Map: ESRI ArcGIS Online,
accessed February 2022
Updated: 2/2/2022
Project No. 63953
Aprx: 63953_La_Brea
Layout: 63953_LaBrea_Vicinity

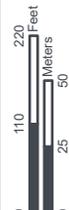
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L.A. BREA TAR PITS MASTER PLAN
Location Map
Figure 2

 Project Area

Los Angeles County, CA
 NAD 1983 UTM Zone 11N
 34.0637°N 118.3576°W



1:2,850

Base Map: ESRI ArcGIS Online
 accessed February 2022
 Updated: 2/2/2022
 Project No. 63953
 Layout: 63953_LaBrea_Location
 Aprx: 63953_La_Brea





- 1 Page Museum Renovations
- 2 Wilshire Gateway Entry Plaza & Lake Pit
- 3 Enhanced Central Green
- 4 Revamped Pit 91
- 5 New Museum Building
- 6 New Public Promenade
- 7 New Pedestrian Path
- 8 6th Street Entry Gateway
- 9 Support Building

L.A. BREA TAR PITS MASTER PLAN
Conceptual Site Plan
Figure 3

Los Angeles County, CA
 34.0637°N 118.3576°W



Base Map: Weiss/Manfredi, 2021
 accessed February 2022
 Updated: 2/2/2022
 Project No. 63953
 Layout: 63953_LaBrea_SitePlan
 Aprx: 63953_La_Brea