

5. Environmental Analysis

5.9 POPULATION AND HOUSING

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) examines the potential for socioeconomic impacts of the proposed Connect Southwest LA project in the County of Los Angeles, including changes in population, employment, and housing.

5.9.1 Environmental Setting

5.9.1.1 RELEVANT PROGRAMS AND REGULATIONS

State

California Housing Element Law

California planning and zoning law requires each city and county to adopt a general plan for future growth (California Government Code § 65300). This plan must include a housing element that identifies housing needs for all economic segments and provides opportunities for housing development to meet that need. At the state level, the Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) estimates each county's share of California's projected population growth based on California Department of Finance population projections and historical growth trends. These figures are compiled by HCD in a Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) for each region of California. Where there is a regional council of governments, the HCD provides the RHNA to the council. The council of governments then assigns a share of the regional housing need to each of its cities and counties, and HCD oversees the process. The process of assigning shares gives cities and counties the opportunity to comment on the proposed allocations.

State law recognizes the vital role local governments play in the supply and affordability of housing. To that end, California Government Code requires that the housing element achieve legislative goals to:

- Identify adequate sites to facilitate and encourage the development, maintenance, and improvement of housing for households of all economic levels, including persons with disabilities.
- Remove, as legally feasible and appropriate, governmental constraints to the production, maintenance, and improvement of housing for persons of all incomes, including those with disabilities.
- Assist in the development of adequate housing to meet the needs of low- and moderate-income households.
- Conserve and improve the condition of housing and neighborhoods, including existing affordable housing. Promote housing opportunities for all persons regardless of race, religion, sex, marital status, ancestry, national origin, color, familial status, or disability.
- Preserve for lower income households the publicly assisted multifamily housing developments in each community.

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California housing element laws (California Government Code §§ 65580–65589) require that each city and county identify and analyze existing and projected housing needs within its jurisdiction and prepare goals, policies, and programs to further the development, improvement, and preservation of housing for all economic segments of the community, commensurate with local housing needs.

Regional

Southern California Association of Governments

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) represents Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties. It is a regional planning agency and serves as a forum for addressing regional issues concerning transportation, the economy, community development, and the environment.

Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy

The 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) was adopted in April 2016 (SCAG 2016). Major themes in the 2016 RTP/SCS include integrating strategies for land use and transportation; striving for sustainability; protecting and preserving existing transportation infrastructure; increasing capacity through improved systems managements; providing more transportation choices; leveraging technology; responding to demographic and housing market changes; supporting commerce, economic growth, and opportunity; promoting the links between public health, environmental protection, and economic opportunity; and incorporating the principles of social equity and environmental justice into the plan.

Local

Los Angeles County Housing Element

The Los Angeles County 2014-2021 Housing Element was adopted by the County Board of Supervisors of February 4, 2014, and certified by HCD on April 30, 2014. The housing element serves as a policy guide to address the comprehensive housing needs of the unincorporated County areas. The primary focus is to ensure decent, safe, sanitary, and affordable housing for current and future residents, including those with special needs.

5.9.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Population

The estimated and forecast populations of the County's Metro Planning Area and unincorporated areas are detailed in Table 5.9-1. As shown, the Metro Planning Area is anticipated to grow slightly faster than the total unincorporated County.

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Table 5.9-1 Population Estimates and Forecasts

Area	Population			Population Change, 2013-2035 [2012-2040]	Percent Change, 2013-2035 [2012-2040]
	2013 [2012]	2016 ³	2035 [2040]		
Metro Planning Area ¹	235,990	--	301,073	65,083	27.6%
Unincorporated Los Angeles County ²	[1,040,700]	1,051,989	[1,273,700]	[233,000]	[22.4%]

Sources:

¹ Los Angeles County General Plan Update Draft EIR, June 2014.

² SCAG 2016.

³ DOF 2016.

The communities of West Athens and Westmont are census designated places; therefore, SCAG does not provide population estimates or projections. However, according to the U.S. 2010 Census, the communities of West Athens and Westmont had populations of 8,729 and 31,853, respectively (Census 2010a). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates from 2011 to 2015 estimate the populations to now be approximately 8,320 residents in West Athens and 32,566 residents in Westmont, totaling 40,886 residents (Census 2015). Collectively, the population in West Athens and Westmont has remained static with an increase of only 304 residents in five years. However, the according to other sources of population data, the communities of West Athens and Westmont showed -5.34 and -2.49 percent population growth from 2000 to 2014, respectively (USA 2014a, 2014b).

Currently, the population of the Specific Plan area, which spans portions of both West Athens and Westmont, is estimated to be approximately 11,158 residents.

Housing

Estimated and forecast housing units in the Metro Planning Area and unincorporated County are detailed in Table 5.9-2.

Table 5.9-2 Housing Estimates and Forecasts

Area	Housing Units			Housing Change, 2013-2035 [2012-2040]	Percent Change, 2013-2035 [2012-2040]
	2012 [2013]	2016 ³	2035 [2040]		
Metro Planning Area ¹	[73,068]	--	92,158	19,090	26.1%
Unincorporated Los Angeles County ²	292,700	311,784	[392,400]	99,700	34.1%

Sources:

¹ Los Angeles County General Plan Update Draft EIR, June 2014.

² SCAG 2016.

³ DOF 2016.

Since the communities of West Athens and Westmont are census designated places, SCAG and the California Department of Finance do not provide housing estimates or projections for them. However, according to the U.S. 2010 Census, the communities of West Athens and Westmont had 2,691 and 10,588 housing units,

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respectively (Census 2010a). The American Community Survey 2011-2015 5-Year Estimates now estimates approximately 2,779 units in West Athens and 11,082 units in Westmont, totaling 13,861 housing units (Census 2015). This represents an approximate increase of 582 units over five years.

Currently, there are approximately 3,457 housing units within the Specific Plan area.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment

The RHNA is mandated by state housing law as part of the periodic process of updating housing elements of local general plans. State law requires that housing elements identify RHNA targets set by HCD to encourage each jurisdiction in the state to provide its fair share of very low, low, moderate, and upper income housing. State law does not require the jurisdiction to build housing; rather, it requires cities and counties to adopt zoning regulations and standards that provide the opportunity for housing development. The RHNA does not promote growth, but provides a long-term outline for housing in the context of local and regional trends and housing production goals.

SCAG determines total housing need for each community in southern California based on three general factors: 1) the number of housing units needed to accommodate future population and employment growth; 2) the number of additional units needed to allow for housing vacancies; and 3) the number of very low, low, moderate, and above moderate income units needed in the community. Additional factors used to determine the RHNA include tenure, the average rate of units needed to replace housing units demolished, and other factors.

The County of Los Angeles' quantified objectives for construction, preservation, and financial assistance over the 2014-2021 planning period are shown in Table 5.9-3. The County is required to ensure that sufficient sites planned and zoned for housing are available to accommodate its need and to implement proactive programs that facilitate and encourage the production of housing commensurate with its housing needs.

Table 5.9-3 Quantified Objectives, Los Angeles County Housing Element 2014-2021

Program	Extremely Low (30% AMI and below)	Very Low (50% AMI and below)	Lower (80% AMI and below)	Moderate (120% AMI and below)	Above Moderate (120% AMI and below)	Total
RHNA	3,927	3,927	4,650	5,060	12,581	30,145
Section 8 Rental Assistance	1,560	2,340	0	0	0	3,900
Family Self Sufficiency	25	75	0	0	0	100
First 5 LA	560	0	0	0	0	560
New Construction Countywide						
- Affordable Rental Housing Construction	175	175	43	0	0	350
- AHOP	0	0	43	0	0	43
Homebuyer Assistance	0	200	425	425	0	1,050
Ownership Housing Rehabilitation	1,265	1,050	1,050	0	0	3,365
Public Housing Modernization	972	973	0	0	0	1,945
Preservation of At-Risk	24	662	263	0	0	949

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Total	8,508	9,402	6,474	5,485	12,581	42,407

Source: Los Angeles County House Element 2014-2021.

Notes: AMI= area mean income

In the absence of income data for extremely low income households, 50% of the very low income units are assumed to be extremely low-income.

Employment

Estimated and forecast jobs in the Metro Planning Area and unincorporated County are detailed in Table 5.9-4.

Table 5.9-4 Employment Estimates and Forecasts

Area	Jobs		Employment Change, 2013-2035 [2012-2040]	Percent Change, 2013-2035 [2012-2040]
	2012 [2013]	2035 [2040]		
Metro Planning Area ¹	[59,359]	100,906	41,547	70.0%
Unincorporated Los Angeles County ²	222,900	[288,400]	65,500	29.4%

Sources:

¹ Los Angeles County General Plan Update Draft EIR, June 2014.

² SCAG 2016.

Since the communities of West Athens and Westmont are not incorporated cities, SCAG does not have estimated and forecast employment for the communities. However, Census data for 2010 estimate approximately 1,181 and 1,830 in West Athens and Westmont respectively (Census 2010b). Census data for 2014 estimate approximately 1,374 and 1,524 jobs in West Athens and Westmont, respectively (Census 2014). Collectively, the two communities had an approximate decrease of 113 jobs from 2010 to 2014. Overall, the two communities currently have about 2,898 jobs, of which the vast majority are within the Specific Plan area.

Currently, there are approximately 2,265 jobs within the Specific Plan area.

Jobs-Housing Balance

The jobs-housing ratio is a general measure of the total number of jobs and housing units in a defined geographic area, without regard to economic constraints or individual preferences. The balance of jobs and housing in an area—in terms of the total number of jobs and housing units as well as the type of jobs versus the price of housing—has implications for mobility, air quality, and the distribution of tax revenues. The jobs/housing ratio is one indicator of a project’s effect on growth and quality of life in the project area. SCAG applies the jobs-housing ratio at the regional and subregional levels to analyze the fit between jobs, housing, and infrastructure. A major focus of SCAG’s regional planning efforts has been to improve this balance. SCAG defines the jobs-housing balance as follows:

Jobs and housing are in balance when an area has enough employment opportunities for most of the people who live there and enough housing opportunities for most of the people who work there. The region as a whole is, by definition, balanced.... Job-rich subregions

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have ratios greater than the regional average; housing-rich subregions have ratios lower than the regional average.

Ideally, job-housing balance would... assure not only a numerical match of jobs and housing but also an economic match in type of jobs and housing.

Jobs-housing goals and ratios are advisory only. No ideal jobs-housing ratio is adopted in state, regional, or City policies. The American Planning Association (APA) is an authoritative resource for community planning best practices, including recommendations for assessing jobs-housing ratios. Although the APA recognizes that an ideal jobs-housing ratio will vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, its recommended target for an appropriate jobs-housing ratio is 1.5, with a recommended range of 1.3 to 1.7 (Weltz 2003).

Jobs-housing balance applies to regions and not to small geographic areas and/or small populations. The jobs-housing balance for the Specific Plan area, Metro Planning Area, and unincorporated Los Angeles County are detailed in Table 5.9-5. As shown, the jobs-housing ratio for the Specific Plan area would increase and improve from 0.66 to 1.15. The Metro Planning Area is anticipated to increase its jobs-housing ratio by 2035 while unincorporated Los Angeles County would slightly reduce its jobs-housing ratio by 2040.

Table 5.9-5 Jobs-Housing Balance

	Year	Employment	Households	Jobs-Housing Ratio
Specific Plan Area	2015	2,265	3,457	0.66
Metro Planning Area ¹	2013	59,359	73,068	0.81
	2035	100,906	92,158	1.09
Unincorporated Los Angeles County ²	2012	222,900	292,700	0.76
	2040	288,400	392,400	0.73

¹ Los Angeles County General Plan Update Draft EIR, June 2014.

² SCAG 2016.

5.9.2 Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and the County of Los Angeles Environmental Checklist Form, a project would normally have a significant effect on the environment if the project would:

- P-1 Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure).
- P-2 Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, especially affordable housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.
- P-3 Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.
- P-4 Cumulatively exceed official regional or local population projections.

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5.9.3 Plans, Programs, and Policies

No project design features or regulatory requirements are applicable to population and housing.

5.9.4 Environmental Impacts

The following impact analysis addresses thresholds of significance for which the Notice of Preparation disclosed potentially significant impacts. The applicable thresholds are identified in brackets after the impact statement.

Impact 5.9-1: The proposed project would introduce approximately 3,204 additional residents and 2,949 additional workers into the Specific Plan area. [Threshold P-1 and P-4]

Impact Analysis: Buildout of the Specific Plan area in accordance with the proposed zoning district would allow up to 1,061 additional residential units and 1,690,638 additional square feet of nonresidential development, and thereby introduce 3,204 additional residents and 2,949 additional workers.

Population Growth

Although population projections within the communities of West Athens and Westmont are not available, Table 5.9-1 details population projections for the Metro Planning Area and unincorporated Los Angeles County. The project's anticipated net population increase of 3,204 residents is well within both the forecast population growths for the Metro Planning Area for 2013 to 2035 (65,083 residents) and unincorporated Los Angeles County for 2012 to 2040 (233,000 residents)—representing only 4.9 and 1.4 percent of the forecast population increase, respectively. Therefore, population growth impacts of the proposed project would be less than significant.

Housing

Currently, the Specific Plan area has approximately 3,457 residential units. The proposed Specific Plan would allow development of up to 4,518 units or 1,061 additional units compared to existing conditions. Housing forecasts for the Metro Planning Area and unincorporated Los Angeles County are detailed in Table 5.9-2. As shown, the Metro Planning Area is anticipated to increase housing units between 2013 and 2035 by 19,090 units, and unincorporated Los Angeles County is anticipated to increase housing units between 2012 and 2040 by 99,700 units. The additional 1,061 housing units allowed under the Specific Plan would be within both housing forecasts for the Metro Planning Area and unincorporated Los Angeles County, representing only 5.6 and 1.1 percent of each area's increase, respectively. Thus, project impacts on housing would be less than significant as well.

Employment

Employment projections for the Metro Planning Area between 2013 and 2035 and for unincorporated Los Angeles County between 2012 and 2040 are approximately 41,547 and 65,500 jobs, respectively (see Table 5.9-4). The Specific Plan is expected to generate 2,949 additional jobs from development of up to 1,690,638 additional square feet of nonresidential development. Therefore, the proposed project represents 7.1 and 4.5

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percent of the projected employment increases in the Metro Planning Area and unincorporated Los Angeles County, respectively. Project impacts to employment growth would be less than significant.

Jobs-Housing Balance

Development of the proposed project would introduce 2,949 additional employees and 1,061 additional dwelling units in the Specific Plan area. Table 5.9-6 compares the jobs-housing balance of the Specific Plan area under existing conditions to project buildout by 2035. As shown, buildout of the proposed project would improve the Specific Plan area's jobs-housing balance by increasing it from 0.66 to 1.15.

Table 5.9-6 Jobs-Housing Balance in the Specific Plan Area

	Existing Conditions (2015)	Project Buildout (2035)
Jobs	2,265	5,214
Households	3,457	4,518
Jobs-Housing Balance	0.66	1.15

More typically, jobs-housing balance applies to regions and not to small geographic areas and/or small populations (i.e., the Specific Plan area). Thus, as detailed in Table 5.9-7, the jobs-housing ratio in the Metro Planning Area in 2035 would increase from 1.09 to 1.11 with buildout of the proposed project. This is a slightly favorable impact. Therefore, no adverse impact on jobs-housing balance would occur.

Table 5.9-7 Project Impacts on Jobs-Housing Balance

	Metro Planning Area Buildout	Specific Plan Buildout Net Increase	Metro Planning Area + Specific Plan Buildout
Jobs	100,906	2,949	103,855
Households	92,158	1,061	93,219
Jobs-Housing Balance	1.09	--	1.11

Source: Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning. 2014. Los Angeles County General Plan Update Draft EIR.

¹ Numbers of households is estimated based on estimated/forecast dwelling units and the estimated 4.7 percent vacancy rate in 2012 in the South Bay Cities Subregion.

² Based on net increase of 2,271 housing units and a 3.5-percent vacancy rate in West Carson obtained from the 2010 US Census.

Level of Significance before Mitigation: Based on the analysis above, Impact 5.9-1 would be less than significant.

Impact 5.9-2: Implementation of the Specific Plan would not result in displacing substantial numbers of people or housing. [Threshold P-2 and P-3]

Impact Analysis: The proposed Specific Plan would change the General Plan designations and zoning onsite to increase residential and nonresidential development. Future projects in accordance with the Specific Plan may redevelop properties by demolishing homes or structures. However, Connect Southwest LA: A TOD Specific Plan for West Athens-Westmont is a planning document used to guide future development in the project area and would not implement any individual development project. Redevelopment would add

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housing to the project area. Therefore, implementation of the Specific Plan would not significantly displace people or housing. Overall, buildout of the proposed project would increase residential development by 1,061 units and nonresidential development by 1,690,638 square feet. Thus, impacts would be less than significant.

Level of Significance before Mitigation: Based on the analysis above, Impact 5.9-2 would be less than significant.

5.9.5 Cumulative Impacts

Future development projects associated with buildout of the County's 2035 General Plan would include the development of residential and nonresidential uses in unincorporated Los Angeles County. SCAG projections for net increases in population, housing, and employment between 2012 and 2040 are discussed above in Section 5.9.2, *Existing Conditions*. Compared to SCAG's 2040 population projection for unincorporated Los Angeles County, net buildout of the proposed project would represent only 0.3 percent of the projected population (1,273,700 residents), 0.3 percent of the projected housing (392,400 homes), and 1.0 percent of the projected employment (288,400 jobs).

The proposed project is small within the context of unincorporated Los Angeles County and would nominally change the SCAG-projected jobs-housing ratio from 0.73 to 0.74 by 2040. In consideration of the preceding factors, the project's contribution to cumulative population growth impacts would be less than significant, and project impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

5.9.6 Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Upon implementation of regulatory requirements and standard conditions of approval, the following impacts would be less than significant: 5.9-1 and 5.9-2.

5.9.7 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

5.9.8 Level of Significance After Mitigation

Impacts would be less than significant.

5.9.9 References

California Department of Finance (DOF). 2016, May 1. Report E-5: Population and Housing Estimates for Cities, Counties, and the State, January 1, 2011-2016, with 2010 Benchmark.

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