

SENT VIA E-MAIL:

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**Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the
Festival Anaheim Hills Project (Proposed Project)
(SCH No: 2024010859)**

South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD) staff appreciate the opportunity to review the above-mentioned document. The City of Anaheim is the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Lead Agency for the Proposed Project. To provide context, South Coast AQMD staff has provided a brief summary of the project information and prepared the following comments which are organized by topic of concern.

Summary of Proposed Project Information in the DEIR

Based on the DEIR, the Proposed Project consists of: 1) a new 16.5-acre Development Area (DA5) within the existing boundaries of the Anaheim Hills Festival Specific Plan to accommodate residential uses in combination with the sites existing commercial development. General Plan Amendment Specific Plan Amendment, and a Zoning code Amendment to incorporate the proposed residential standards into DA5; 2) demolishing a 62.676 square foot theater and constructing 447 residential units.¹ Project construction is conservatively estimated in this EIR to commence in September 2026 and conclude by December 2029.² The project is located at the southeast corner of East Santa Ana Canyon Road and South Festival Drive, Anaheim.³ Based on staff review of the aerial imagery, the nearest residential sensitive receptor is located directly adjacent to the south west and west of the Project site.

South Coast AQMD Comments

Insufficient Consideration of Operational Air Quality Impacts in the DEIR: Need for Operational HRA and LST Evaluations

The DEIR omits an operational health risk assessment (HRA) and localized significance analysis for operational emissions, based on the assumption that the project lacks stationary sources or prolonged idling activity. However, this conclusion is not adequately supported. Regardless of whether the project is primarily residential, it may still generate operational emissions from mobile sources such as residential traffic, delivery and service vehicles, waste collection, and

¹ DEIR. Page 8.

² *Ibid.* Page 58.

³ *Ibid.* Page 47.

landscape maintenance equipment. Additionally, commercial components of the project may contribute to recurring on-site mobile activity and idling.

Based on South Coast AQMD guidance, the toxic air contaminants (TACs), especially diesel particulate matter (DPM) from operational mobile sources should be evaluated when sensitive receptors are located nearby.⁴ In this case, sensitive receptors include the adjacent residential uses, and additional nearby receptors include the St. Jude Heritage Medical Group – Anaheim Hills, a medical clinic that serves vulnerable populations. Given the proximity of these receptors, an operational HRA and operational localized significance analysis for criteria pollutants should be conducted to evaluate the project's health risk and air quality impacts on surrounding land uses. This is consistent with CEQA's requirement to disclose and mitigate significant environmental impacts the project may cause to the surrounding community.

Emission Reductions from Health Risk Strategies

South Coast AQMD is concerned about the potential public health impacts of siting existing and new sensitive populations within the proximity of existing air pollution sources (e.g., freeway, railroad). For this reason, prior to approving this Proposed Project as well as any future development projects, the Lead Agency is recommended to consider the impacts of air pollutants on people who will live in the new project area and provide effective mitigation. Additionally, South Coast AQMD suggests that the Lead Agency review and apply the guidance provided in: 1) the California Air Resources Board (CARB) Air Quality Land Use and Handbook: A Community Health Perspective⁵ which provides criteria for evaluating and reducing air pollution impacts associated with new projects involving land use decisions; and 2) CARB's technical advisory which contains strategies to reduce air pollution exposure near high-volume roadways.⁶

Many strategies are available for residential receptors to reduce being exposed to particulate matter, including, but not limited to, HVAC systems equipped with filters rated at a minimum efficiency reporting value (MERV) 13 or higher air filtration capabilities. In some cases, MERV 15 or better is recommended, for building design, orientation, location, vegetation barriers, landscaping screening, etc. Enhanced filtration units are capable of reducing exposure. However, enhanced filtration systems have limitations. For example, filters rated MERV 13 or higher are able to screen out greater than or equal to 50% of DPM⁷ but they have no ability to filter out volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions. Also, in a study that South Coast AQMD conducted to investigate filters rated at MERV 13 or better in classrooms,⁸ a cost burden is expected to be within the range of \$120 to \$240 per year to replace each filter panel. The initial

⁴ South Coast AQMD HRA guidance for TACS: https://www.aqmd.gov/home/rules-compliance/ceqa/air-quality-analysis-handbook/mobile-source-toxics-analysis?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁵ California Air Resources Board (CARB), Air Quality Land Use and Handbook: A Community Health Perspective, April 2005. Available at: https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2023-05/Land%20Use%20Handbook_0.pdf

⁶ CARB's Strategies to Reduce Air Pollution Exposure Near High-Volume Roadways. Available at: https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2017-10/rd_technical_advisory_final.pdf

⁷ U.S. EPA, "What is a MERV rating?" Available at: <https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/what-merv-rating>.

⁸ South Coast AQMD, Draft Pilot Study of High-Performance Air Filtration For Classroom Applications, October 2009. Available at: <https://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/ceqa/handbook/aqmdpilotstudyfinalreport.pdf>.

⁹ South Coast AQMD, Draft Pilot Study of High-Performance Air Filtration For Classroom Applications, October 2009. Available at: <https://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/ceqa/handbook/aqmdpilotstudyfinalreport.pdf>.

start-up cost could substantially increase if an HVAC system needs to be installed and if standalone filter units are required. Installation costs may vary, including costs for conducting site assessments and obtaining permits and approvals before filters can be installed. Other costs may include filter life monitoring, annual maintenance, and training for conducting maintenance and reporting. In addition, the filters would not have any effect unless the HVAC system is running. Therefore, when in use, the increased energy consumption from each HVAC system should be evaluated in the Draft EIR. While the filters operate 100 percent of the time when the HVAC is in use while the residents are indoors, the environmental analysis does not generally account for the times when the residents are not using their HVAC and instead have their windows or doors open or are moving throughout the common space outdoor areas of the Proposed Project. Furthermore, when used filters are replaced with new filters, emissions associated with trucks delivering the new filters and waste disposal trucks transporting the used filters to disposal sites should be evaluated in the Draft EIR. Therefore, any presumed effectiveness and feasibility of a particular HVAC filter should be carefully evaluated in more detail based on supporting evidence before assuming they will sufficiently alleviate exposure to DPM emissions.

Conclusion

As set forth in California Public Resources Code Section 21092.5(a) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15088(a-b), the Lead Agency shall evaluate comments from public agencies on the environmental issues and prepare a written response at least 10 days prior to certifying the Final EIR. As such, please provide South Coast AQMD written responses to all comments contained herein at least 10 days prior to the certification of the Final EIR. In addition, as provided by CEQA Guidelines Section 15088(c) if the Lead Agency's position is at variance with recommendations provided in this comment letter, detailed reasons supported by substantial evidence in the record to explain why specific comments and suggestions are not accepted must be provided.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. South Coast AQMD staff is available to work with the Lead Agency to address any air quality questions that may arise from this comment letter. Please contact Sahar Ghadimi, Air Quality Specialist, at sghadimi@aqmd.gov should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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Planning, Rule Development & Implementation

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