

**SANTA MONICA COLLEGE MADISON THEATER  
SUMMARY OF DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (DEIR)**

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Madison Theater Project provides for the construction and operation of a state-of-the-art, 500-seat theater facility (535 seats when orchestra pit is not in use) for instruction and performance uses. The project includes converting the existing unused school auditorium into a classroom rehearsal hall and resurfacing and redesigning the surface parking lot.

The new theater adds about 32,302 square feet of floor area to the existing building of 39,540 square feet for a total of about 71,842 square feet, on the campus site of about 4.4 acres bounded by Santa Monica Boulevard to the south, Arizona Avenue to the north, 10th Street to the west, and 11th Street to the east. The new floor area ratio (FAR) for the entire site will be 0.37:1. The theater includes stepped building heights of 14 feet, 31 feet, 56 feet, and 70 feet above grade level.

The existing driveways on Santa Monica Boulevard and on 11th Street will continue to be used for ingress and egress access. The existing parking lot will be reconfigured to provide 301 parking spaces, an increase of 12 spaces over the current 289 spaces. Shade trees and semi-permeable pavement surfaces will be incorporated to reduce solar heat attenuation, improve surface water quality, and reduce excessive surface water runoff.

Construction is anticipated to take about two years, with occupancy anticipated by late 2005.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The principal project objectives are to: include teaching, practice, and performance into a single mid-sized state-of-the-art multi-purpose facility to accommodate theater, dance, voice, instrument, chamber orchestra, lectures, and film; operate the theater as a component of instruction in the performing arts at the Madison Campus site; and provide development consistent with the SMC Master Plan to provide “stand-alone” design principles for satellite campuses, foster responsible campus development for orderly program growth, and to recognize the community of users and provide more visible and accessible public amenities.

The project is also intended to support the new admission requirements (beginning in Fall 2003) of the University of California (UC) and the California State Universities (CSU) for completion of one year of coursework in Visual and Performing Arts. The project enhances the ability to provide community college instructional alternatives to meet the new admission requirement, and remedies existing SMC facility deficiencies in support of performance in music and dance and in support of visiting artists in music, dance, theater, and lecture.

The project is also intended to improve cultural understanding, provide for cultural arts programming for public education and enjoyment, and provide a community resource for community programs.

## **CEQA PROCESS AND THE DEIR**

The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) represents a significant milestone in the process that the Santa Monica College Board of Trustees is following in complying with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and with the Santa Monica College Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA with regard to the proposed Madison Theater Project.

This draft EIR will be available for public review and comment for a period of 45 days, ending April 25, 2003, and following that review, a final EIR will be prepared, including all written comments and recommendations received by individuals, organizations, and public agencies during the public review period, responses to those comments, and additions or corrections to the report as needed.

The purpose of the CEQA process is to provide public disclosure to inform decision makers and the public about potential significant environmental effects of proposed activities and to require agencies to prevent significant, avoidable environmental damage by implementing alternatives or mitigation measures where feasible.

Following the preparation of the final EIR, the process will culminate with a hearing by the SMC Board of Trustees to consider certification of a Final EIR (FEIR) and a decision on whether or not to approve the proposed project.

## **FINDINGS OF THE DEIR**

The Executive Summary of the Draft EIR (Part II) provides a comprehensive summary of the project environmental impacts and mitigation measures. The unavoidable significant environmental impacts are detailed in Part VIII.

There are either no impacts or the impacts are less than significant after mitigation on Aesthetics (Views, Light & Glare), Shade & Shadow, Air Quality, Historical Resources, Hydrology/Water Quality, Police, Fire, Parks and Recreation, Schools, Water Conservation, and Wastewater.

The environmental impact on parking would be less than significant with the implementation of the Parking Operations Plan (Section V-H) as a mitigation.

Environmental impacts on Land Use are less than significant with mitigation with the exception of the height restrictions of the underlying R3 zoning districts. The project's height would constitute a significant and unavoidable impact. (It should be noted that although portions of the proposed project exceed the allowable height limit for the underlying R-3 zoning district, the study determined that the project height produces no significant off-site Shade, Shadow, or View impacts.) A discussion of this issue begins on page 16 of Section V-E (Land Use).

The study identified less than significant Noise impacts, with the exception of activities in the parking lot during the late evening departure period (10 pm). No feasible mitigation measures are available for this impact. The project impact is quantified as an increase of 3 dBA in the best case and 5 dBA in the worst case (dBA stands for "A-weighted" decibels, or sound level

pressures that are weighted to reflect the sound frequencies that correspond to the maximum human sensitivity). The City of Santa Monica's threshold of significance is an increase of 3 dBA. Increases in noise below 3 dBA are normally imperceptible. A discussion of this issue can be found in Section V-F (Noise).

The Draft EIR analyzes traffic impacts at 42 intersections and 13 roadway segments. The analysis includes the current year 2002, Year 2005 without project and with project, and Year 2009 without project and with project. The impacts were studied for six time periods: morning and evening weekday peak commuter hours, weekday theater arrival and departure, and weekend theater arrival and departure.

Traffic impacts are measured in several ways. Average Delay is expressed in seconds per vehicle. The V/C ratio is the ratio of volume to capacity. Both measures contribute to defining the Level of Service (LOS) for an intersection, which is a letter grade A through F. All these measures rely on an actual counting of cars. The traffic study uses City of Santa Monica criteria, standards, and definitions for evaluating current, future, and projected level of service and potential impacts. The City's criteria are very sensitive with an increase of as little as one car to an intersection triggering the finding of a significant impact in certain situations.

There is no impact or the impact is less than significant at 37 of the 42 intersections. There is significant impact at five intersections. These intersections are 9th, 10th, 12th, and Euclid Streets at Santa Monica Boulevard, and 10th Street at Wilshire Boulevard. All of these intersections are unsignalized. The year 2005 additions to vehicle count that lead to significant impacts are reported as follows:

- An increase ranging from 2 to 7 cars per hour due to the Madison Theater Project at the four Santa Monica Boulevard intersections during morning and evening weekday commuter hours (the total car count per hour at these intersections ranges from about 1,900 to 2,650 per hour during commuter hours).
- A weekday arrival increase of 25 cars per hour due to the Madison Theater Project (of a total car count of about 3,035) and a weekday departure increase of 4 cars per hour (out of about 1,870) at 10th and Wilshire; and a weekday arrival ranging from 65 to 77 cars per hour (out of a total range of about 2,035 to 2,300 cars per hour) at the four Santa Monica Boulevard intersections.
- A weekend arrival increase of 24 cars per hour due to the Madison Theater Project (out of about 2,930) and a weekend departure increase of 5 cars per hour (out of about 2,150) at 10th and Wilshire and a weekend arrival increase ranging from 64 to 77 cars per hour (out of a total ranging from about 1,880 to 2,070) at the four Santa Monica Boulevard intersections.
- A weekend departure increase of 65 cars per hour due to the Madison Theater Project (out of about 1,480) at Euclid and Santa Monica Boulevard.

These results are provided as a bar graph on page 59 of Section V-H.1. The year 2009 results are provided on page 89.

The Draft EIR identifies traffic mitigations that will reduce the project impact at all of the above intersections to less than significant. However, the mitigations are within the implementing authority of the City of Santa Monica.

There is no impact or the impact is less than significant at 8 of the thirteen street segments in the study. There is significant impact at the Arizona Avenue segments west and east of 10th Street (an Average Daily Trip weekday increase due to the Madison Theater Project of about 19 trips, out of a total of about 8,000 daily trips). There is significant impact at the Arizona Avenue segment east of 11th Street (an Average Daily Trip weekday increase of about 26, out of about 7,000). There is significant impact at the 11th Street segment south of Arizona with a weekday increase of 165 trips out of about 13,500 trips and at the 11th Street segment south of Santa Monica Boulevard with a weekday increase of 179 trips out of about 15,575 trips. The summary chart for 2005 appears on page V-H.1-60 and for 2009 on V-H.1- 90.

Significant environmental impacts are summarized in a separate analysis titled “Neighborhood Analysis.” There are no significant impacts identified in the neighborhood analysis other than those discussed above.

### **CONSIDERATIONS IN PREPARING THIS DEIR**

The Madison Theater Project Draft EIR is extremely rigorous in its methodology, data collection, and scope of review:

- The traffic study analyzed 55 locations (including 42 study intersections and 13 study street segments), compared to 30 intersections for the City of Santa Monica’s Main Library Final EIR, prepared for a much larger project.
- The traffic study uses new traffic counts and does not rely on June 1999 data that the City of Santa Monica uses for their EIRs.
- The cumulative projects list (a listing of Citywide approved and proposed projects that could add cumulative environmental impacts to the proposed project site, if constructed) has been thoroughly updated and augmented to include numerous projects approved with Administrative Approvals and not included on the City of Santa Monica list, while those withdrawn from consideration were deleted, resulting in a more accurate base to measure against.
- It is also noted that cumulative impacts analyzed in this EIR (impacts from Citywide approved and proposed projects considered in total with the Madison Theater project) would likely represent a "worst case" scenario (higher than would be expected) because impact projections for some of these other non-Madison Theater projects have been calculated without subtracting (netting out) existing uses on the project sites. Moreover, each of the other non-Madison Theater projects would likely be subject to as yet unspecified mitigation measures, which would also reduce cumulative impacts. Finally, it is likely that some of the other non-Madison Theater projects will not be constructed or opened until after the Madison Theater project has been built and occupied.

- The Draft EIR uses the City of Santa Monica traffic threshold of significance, considered as one of the most rigorous in the nation.
- The parking analyses assumed approximately one car needed for every two theater seats. City codes allow one parking space for every four seats.
- Public notification regarding the EIR preparation has greatly exceeded requirements. A notice to solicit public comments and conduct a public scoping meeting was sent to all households within the City of Santa Monica in May 2002. A notice of availability of the Draft EIR is currently being mailed to all households within the City (March 2003).