


CITY OF SANTA CLARITA
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: Chair Berlin and Members of the Planning Commission
FROM: Patrick Leclair, Planning Manager 
DATE: June 9, 2023
SUBJECT: SHADOWBOX STUDIOS PROJECT (MASTER CASE 21-109)

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Planning Commission with additional clarification and information on a number of topics, in advance of the Planning Commission hearing, scheduled for June 20, 2023, on the Shadowbox Studios Project (Project) as requested by the Planning Commission. At the regular meeting of the Planning Commission on May 16, 2023, following a staff presentation, an applicant presentation, and testimony from the public, the Planning Commission requested clarification and additional information on several topics as follows:

1. Alternative 3
2. Zoning
3. Building Height
4. Emergency Operation Plan
5. Street Improvement Plan
6. Project Operation
7. Oak Trees
8. Project Renderings

Additional information is provided on these topics below.

Alternative 3

The Planning Commission inquired about Alternative 3, the reduced studio alternative. Alternative 3 considered a studio Project with a reduction in floor area of approximately 24 percent. The overall development footprint would remain the same, and require the same amount of grading. The overall building massing for Alternative 3 would be similar to the Project as the warehouse/production support and sound stage buildings would generally remain in the same location on the Project site and be the same height as the Project proposal. The perimeter fencing and landscaping would be the same as the Project. Because the development footprint and grading remain the same, the oak tree impacts would be unchanged. There would be a reduction in employment of approximately 10 to 15 percent.

When comparing the impacts between the Project and Alternative 3, Alternative 3 has slightly lower impacts in areas of air quality, energy, GHG emissions, public services, transportation, and utilities. While impacts in these areas are slightly less than the Project, Alternative 3 would still

require the same mitigation measures as the Project to ensure impacts remain less than significant.

In accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an analysis of project alternatives is prepared for purposes of evaluating the potential to reduce or lessen any of the significant effects of the project and for purposes of fostering informed decision making. It is at the discretion of the Planning Commission to determine the appropriate recommendation on the Project, which, if recommended for approval, could include the recommendation for one of the alternatives analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR).

Zoning

The Project site is located within the Mixed-Use Neighborhood (MXN) zone. The studio use is permitted in the MXN zone with approval of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). While the Project site is also located within the Placerita Canyon Special Standards District (PCSSD), there is nothing in the PCSSD that would preclude the Project site from operating as a studio. The PCSSD does not regulate the types of uses allowed on a property. A studio use can be permitted within the PCSSD.

Building Height

The Project proposal includes a maximum building height of 55 feet. The proposed buildings range in height from 18 feet (catering buildings) to 55 feet (peak of the sound stages). The applicant has prepared additional site sections (Attachment A), to provide further situational context for the building locations in relationship to the street frontages of Railroad Avenue, 13th, Arch, and 12th Streets, as well as the Metropolitan Water District (MWD) property and the residential uses beyond. Attachment A provides five site sections as follows:

- Section 1 provides the relationship between the catering building and 12th Street. The catering building is a maximum of 18 feet in height and setback 74 feet from the street right-of-way. As shown in the site section, 12th Street is approximately slightly higher than the elevation of the building pad for the catering building.
- Section 2 provides the relationship between the catering building and Arch Street. The catering building is a maximum of 18 feet in height, and is setback 54 feet from the street right-of-way.
- Section 3 shows the relationship between the office building and the 13th Street frontage. The maximum building height is 48 feet and is setback 39 feet from the right-of-way. The office building pad elevation is slightly lower than the elevation of 13th Street.
- Section 4 shows the production support building along Railroad Avenue. The production support building is a maximum height of 50 feet and setback from the right-of-way nearly 170 feet. The parking structure is not depicted in the site section, but is also setback 170 feet from Railroad Avenue. It is situated between the production support building and the office building, and is 45 feet in height, with an elevator shaft of 57 feet.
- Section 5 shows the relationship between the sound stage buildings and the MWD property, and residential properties to the east. The sound stage buildings have a maximum height of 55 feet at the peak of the ridge. The buildings are located approximately 325 feet from the residential uses to the east. As seen in the site section, the sound stage building pad is lower than the MWD property and residential properties to the east.

The site is located within the MXN zone, which permits a building height of 50 feet. The MXN zone contemplates a mix of residential and commercial uses, and specific to the Shadowbox Studios proposal, the studio use is permitted in the MXN zone with approval of a CUP. Properties to the south, across 13th Street, and extending to Market Street are also within the MXN zone, allowing the development of residential and commercial uses and building heights of 50 feet. Properties to the west, across Railroad Avenue, and north of 13th Street, are in the Community Commercial (CC) zone. Properties to the west, across Railroad Avenue, and to the south are located within the Old Town Newhall Specific Plan (ONSP). Development in the CC and ONSP zones can be permitted over 35 feet with the approval of a CUP.

In analysis of the proposed Project, staff has looked at development in the Newhall area, and looked at permitted building heights in the vicinity of the Project area to evaluate the Shadowbox Studios Project. As shown in Attachment B development in the Newhall area in recent years, with the revitalization of Old Town Newhall and buildout of The Masters University Master Plan, includes several projects with building heights that exceed 35 feet.

Emergency Operation Plan

The Planning Commission inquired about the preparation of an Emergency Operation Plan (EOP) for the Shadowbox Studios Project. Any staff recommendation on the Project would include a Condition of Approval to require Shadowbox Studios to prepare a site-specific EOP prior to Certificate of Occupancy. The applicant's consultant, Dudek, has prepared a narrative to outline what an EOP is and what information is contained in the EOP, provided here as Attachment C. A component of the EOP would include training of security personnel and tenants of the studio to ensure preparedness for emergency events.

Street Improvement Plan

The Planning Commission inquired about an interim street improvement plan in the event the Shadowbox Studios Project were to be operational prior to the completion of the Dockweiler Drive Extension project. The Transportation Assessment (TA) prepared for the Project provided an analysis of the Project without the completion of the Dockweiler Drive Extension project. The TA concludes that the street improvements to complete the widening of the rail crossing at 13th Street and Railroad Avenue, as well as the widening of 13th, Arch, and 12th Streets would be required, with or without the construction of Dockweiler Drive. Any staff recommendation on the Project would include Condition(s) of Approval to require installation of the widened rail crossing at 13th Street and Railroad Avenue, designed to meet the current design and safety standards of the California Public Utilities Commission, as well as installation of the widening of 13th, Arch, and 12th Streets prior to occupancy of the studio. The TA finds that even without the connection to Dockweiler Drive, the intersections in the immediate vicinity of the Project operate at acceptable levels of service with these improvements in place. Thus, completion of those improvements, required prior to operation of the studio use, eliminate a need for any interim condition. The applicant's consultant has prepared further discussion on this topic in Attachment D.

It should also be noted that the Emergency Evacuation Analysis prepared for the Project studied the evacuation time from the Placerita Canyon area without consideration of the Dockweiler Drive Extension. The emergency analysis that was prepared assumed that all evacuation trips

would exit the Placerita Canyon area through the intersection of 13th Street and Railroad Avenue. The analysis compared the time to evacuate the Placerita Canyon community today, under the existing conditions, with the time to evacuate the Placerita Canyon community under the proposed Project conditions that include the widening of the rail crossing at 13th Street and Railroad Avenue, as well as the widening of 13th, Arch, and 12th Streets. Under the proposed Project conditions, and without the Dockweiler Drive connection, the evacuation time is reduced by more than half.

Project Operations

The Planning Commission inquired about operational aspects of the Project, including hours of operation, truck deliveries, and the adequacy of the vehicle queuing at the Project entry gates. The applicant has prepared a narrative to outline the operational characteristics including queuing capacity, hours of operations, truck deliveries, and management of nighttime noise for clarification of the operational characteristics of the studio campus in Attachment E.

Oak Trees

The Planning Commission inquired about the assessment of the existing Oak Trees on the Project site. The applicant has prepared a narrative to summarize the findings of the Oak Tree Report provided in Attachment F. The City Arborist has reviewed the applicant's Oak Tree Report and Attachment F and confirmed agreement with the assessment provided for each oak tree.

Project Renderings

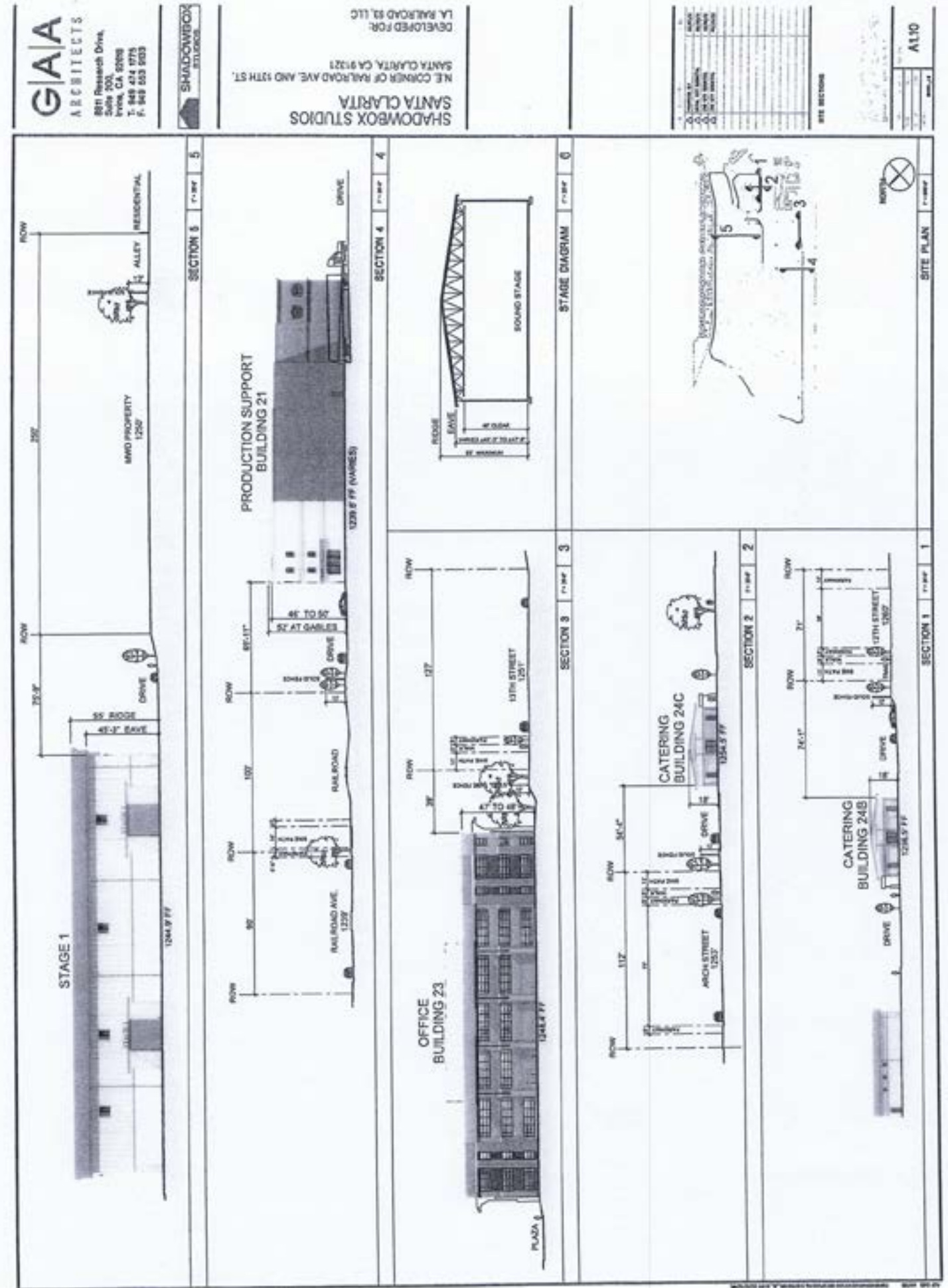
Following discussion by the Planning Commissioners, the applicant has prepared photo simulations from three different perspectives to illustrate what the Project would look like along the street frontages. The depictions are representative of the proposed site plan layout, the architectural elevations prepared for each building, and the proposed landscaping along the street frontages. As shown in Attachment G, each perspective provides the current view alongside a view of the proposed Project. Landscaping is depicted at a growth of five or ten years as indicated in each simulation.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

PL:EI:lh

Attachments

- cc: Jason Crawford, Director of Community Development
- Erika Iverson, Senior Planner
- David Peterson, Senior Planner
- Rachel Clark, Planning Secretary



MEMORANDUM

To: Dennis Hardgrave, Development Planning Services, Inc.
 From: Dudek Fire Protection Planning Team - Michael Huff, Sr. Director
 Subject: Shadowbox Studios - Santa Clarita: Emergency Operations Plan Summary
 Date: June 1, 2023
 cc: N/A
 Attachment(s): N/A

Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) in California cities almost all utilize a state format and customize it some for their particular needs. EOPs have been customized for individual entities including college campuses, camps, construction sites, and others. The Shadowbox Studios plans to provide a facility-focused EOP. The following is a summary of these plans:

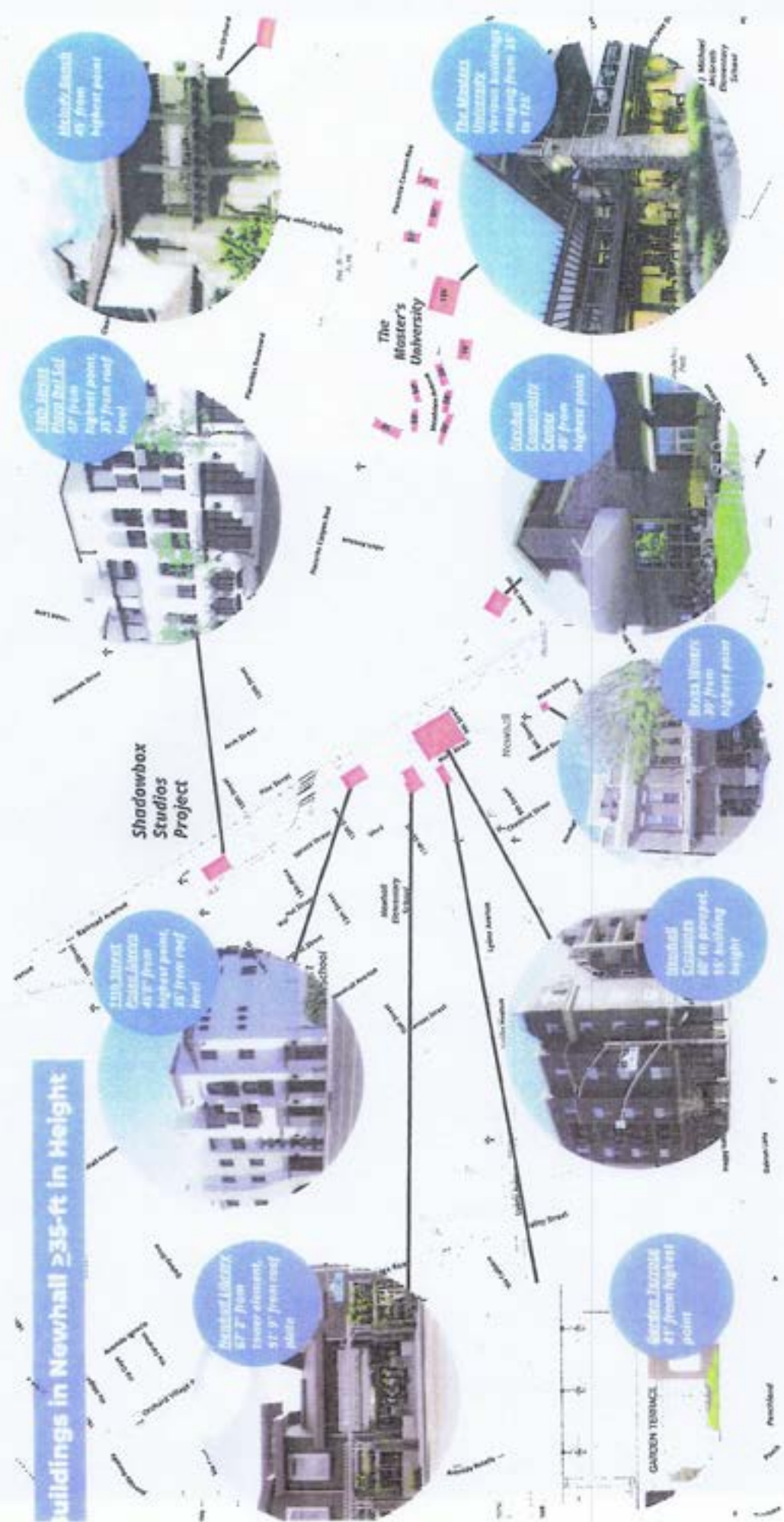
The EOP is for use by counties, cities and other entities to respond to major emergencies and disasters. It describes the roles and responsibilities of all county/city departments, and the relationship between the county/city and its departments and the jurisdictions.

The EOP contains information on the jurisdiction and lists all of the hazards that the county/city/entity is susceptible to. Those hazards include but are not limited to: • Earthquake • Flooding • Drought • Dam Failure • Nuclear-related incidents • Water, Gas or Energy Shortage • Terrorism • Tsunami • Wildland Fire • Urban Fire • Transportation Accidents • Hazardous materials incidents • Landslides.

The EOP describes a comprehensive emergency management system which provides for a planned response to disaster situations associated with natural disasters, technological incidents, terrorism and nuclear-related incidents. It delineates operational concepts relating to various emergency situations, identifies components of the Emergency Management Organization, and describes the overall responsibilities for protecting life and property and assuring the overall wellbeing of the population.

The plan also identifies the sources of outside support which might be provided (through mutual aid and specific statutory authorities) by other jurisdictions, state and federal agencies and the private sector. The plan cites authorities and references to support the plan and has five objectives: 1. To provide a system for the effective management of emergency situations. 2. To identify lines of authority and relationships. 3. To assign tasks and responsibilities. 4. To ensure adequate maintenance of facilities, services and resources. 5. To provide a framework for adequate resources for recovery operations.

The EOP for Shadowbox Studios would be distributed to the management, security personnel, and tenants of the studio. Training of security personnel and tenants of the studio would be provided, and informational graphics would be posted on the site as required under the EOP.





SHADOWBOX STUDIOS

INTERIM IMPROVEMENTS PRIOR TO DOCKWEILER EXTENSION IMPLEMENTATION

The Planning Commission asked if the Shadowbox Studios project could be constructed prior to the full implementation of the Dockweiler Extension. The Transportation Assessment confirms that the project traffic can be adequately accommodated on surrounding streets after completion of the 13th Street rail crossing and the build-out of 13th Street, Arch Street, and 12th Street, and prior to the completion of the Dockweiler Extension.

This scenario was studied in the Transportation Assessment included in the Draft EIR. The full occupancy of the Shadowbox Studios was studied under Future Conditions both with and without the Dockweiler Extension to determine what roadway improvements would be necessary to support the Project under each scenario.

Page 70 of The Transportation Assessment (Appendix L of the Draft EIR) states:

There is a potential for the Project to be opened prior to the construction of the DDEP, in which case the Railroad crossing upgrade and the 13th Street improvements would be accelerated and installed with the Project. This scenario was analyzed without the DDEP and associated shifts in traffic volumes, but with the DDEP improvements along the Project frontage and at the railroad crossing.

Thus, the Transportation Assessment already contemplates that full occupancy of the studio Project would require that the 13th Street Corridor improvements be implemented along with the Project in the event that the Dockweiler Extension was delayed for whatever reason. Table 18 shows that even without the Dockweiler Extension, the key intersections in the vicinity of the Project would operate at acceptable Levels of Service:

Intersection	Future with Project Level of Service	
	AM Peak Hour	PM Peak Hour
5. Railroad Ave. & 13th St.	C	D
16. Arch St. & 13th St.	C	C
17. Arch St. and 12th St.	A	B

The section of 13th Street between Railroad Avenue and Arch Street would be widened to its ultimate cross-section as shown in Figure 22 from the Transportation Assessment (attached). All the additional right-of-way needed to develop this roadway improvement would come from the Shadowbox Studios site and therefore could be dedicated by the Project prior to implementation of the Dockweiler Extension.



The portion of Arch Street between 13th Street and 12th Street might have to be constructed as a temporary 4-lane roadway if the right-of-way purchases associated with the Dockweiler Extension are not yet complete. Again, much of the right-of-way for this roadway section will come from the Shadowbox Studios site and therefore could be dedicated to the City in order to develop a strong connection between the 12th Street corridor and 13th Street. This would ensure continuous access to Railroad Avenue from the Canyon neighborhoods.

The above improvements and conditions are consistent with the Evacuation Analyses summarized on pages 80-85 and in Appendix H of the Transportation Assessment.

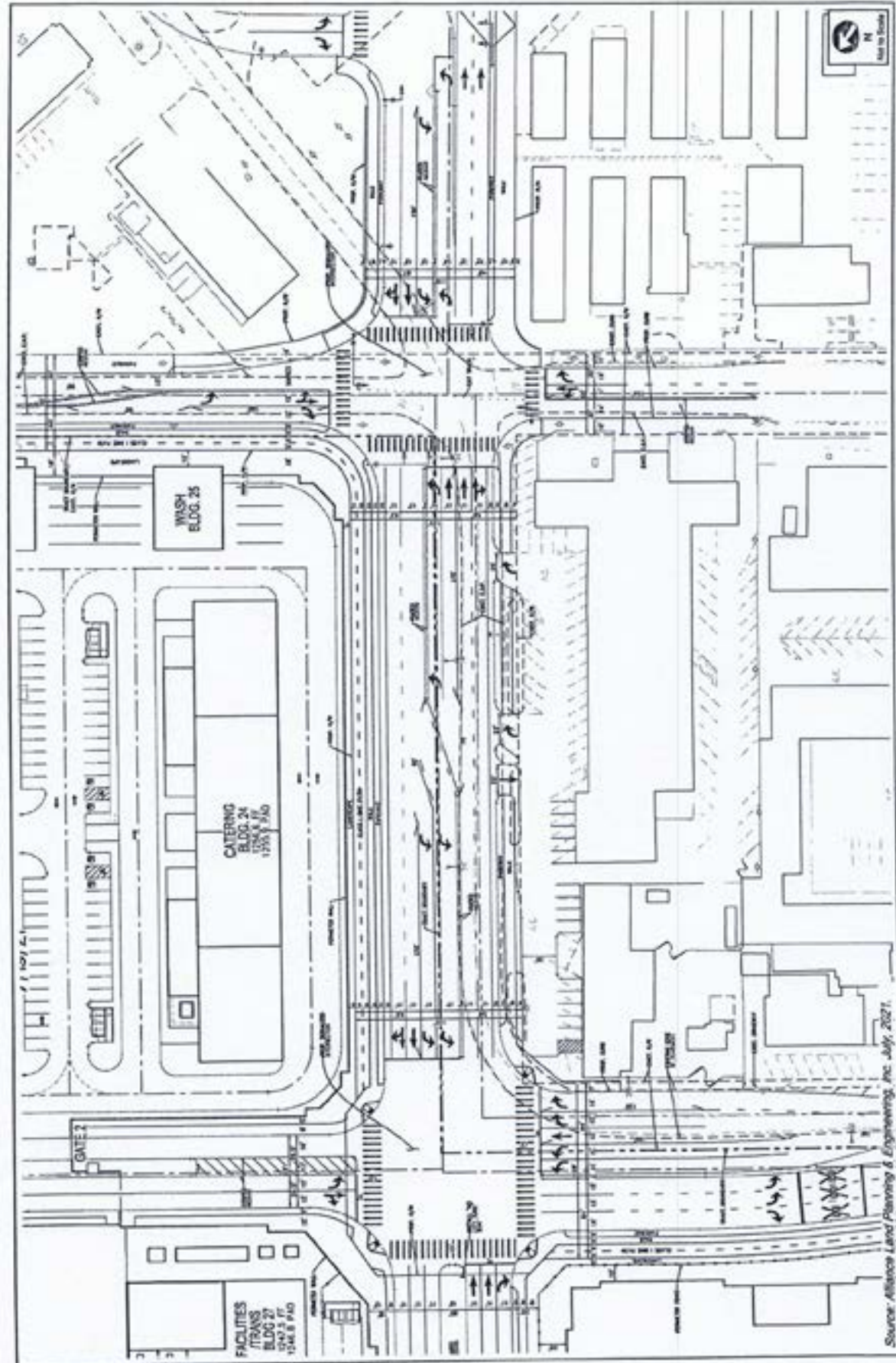


FIGURE 22

ROADWAY CONFIGURATION CONCEPT
TRAFFIC SIGNAL ALTERNATIVE

Source: Alliance Land Planning & Engineering, Inc. July, 2021.

MEMORANDUM: Shadowbox Studios Operations FAQ's
City of Santa Clarita (Master Case 21-109)
 Prepared by Shadowbox Studios - June 8, 2023

Studio Operations FAQ's & Answers:

1. Is there adequate queuing area onsite so that vehicle traffic will not back up off of the Shadowbox property and onto the public streets?

A: Yes. The Queuing Analysis and Traffic Simulation prepared by Gibson Transportation and shown at the May 16, 2023 Planning Commission hearing confirms that there is more than adequate queuing area onsite and will not interfere with nor will it back up on to any of the adjacent or nearby public streets. The analysis provided by Gibson confirms that Shadowbox Studios provides significantly more queuing area than other Los Angeles-area studios and also generates less overall traffic due to the reduced percentage of office space and administrative or corporate functions at Shadowbox Studios in comparison to other large Los Angeles-area studios. The combined total length of entry queuing stacking at Gates #1 and #2 is approximately 2,100 linear feet. Gate 1 begins as a three-lane entry and widens to four lanes to accommodate express entry for cardholders and Gate 2 is a three-lane entry. Gate 3 is a clearly designed and identified for "exit only" for right turns onto 12th Street and will not be used as an entrance except by public safety emergency vehicles.

2. What are the studio's operating hours?

A: 24 hours, with primary operations occurring indoors. See below for transportation and night-time responses.

3. What are the hours of truck deliveries?

- A:** There are typically 4 different types of truck traffic onsite:
- *Normal course of production traffic...typically 6am-10pm
 - *Nighttime course of production traffic...typically 10pm-6am
 - *Return to base from Location shoots...typically 7pm-7am
 - *Food truck deliveries and catering truck arrivals...typically 3am-5am

4. How will you manage nighttime noise?

- A:** A point of contact will be established for the community and City to reach out to the Shadowbox Operations and Security Departments. The following operating policies will be enforced:
- *Direct all vehicular traffic between 10pm and 6am to GATE 1 entrance and exit only.
 - *Direct all large trucks (53' trailers) between 10pm and 6am to warehouses and stages only (no large truck entrance to or exit from North Lot or MWD Lot during these hours)
 - *Allow cast trailers and other vehicles (but not large trucks) between 10pm and 6am to park on North Lot or MWD Lot, but not to back up any vehicles that will prompt back-up beepers.
 - *Develop and communicate to tenants and employees standard operating procedures related to noise mitigation, with special attention to nighttime hours.

5. Will there be outdoor shooting?

A: On occasion outdoor shooting may occur. Shadowbox Studios would limit outdoor shooting throughout studio campus to 6am-10pm unless a permit is obtained through the City of Santa Clarita film office.

MEMORANDUM: Shadowbox Studios Oak Tree Summary

City of Santa Clarita (Master Case 21-109)

Oak Tree Report by Arbor Essence, Kerry Norman. Memorandum by Development Planning Services

June 8, 2023

This memorandum summarizes the information contained in the Shadowbox Studios Draft EIR Arbor Essence "Protected Oak Tree Report", dated July 1, 2021. Any updated oak tree information is included *in italics* within this summary. A total of (16) protected trees are included as part of this report and are identified as coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*). The final Oak Tree Mitigation Plan and Landscape Plans for the Shadowbox Studios project shall be prepared and approved by the City of Santa Clarita prior to issuance of a Grading Permit by the City. As outlined in the preliminary Oak Tree Mitigation Plan the poor health of the subject site trees and their locations results in a recommendation to mitigate their removal with a robust mix of oak tree species and sizes to be located in prominent locations on the Studio project site. The result will be an increase in both the quantity and health of specimen trees at this gateway location.

The site contains 7 heritage size trees. A heritage oak tree is defined as any oak tree measuring one hundred eight (108) inches or, in the case of a multiple trunk tree, two (2) or more trunks measuring seventy-two (72) inches each or greater in circumference, measured four and one-half (4 1/2) feet above the natural grade surrounding such tree.

The oak tree report identified a total of 13 protected oaks as being proposed for removal as part of this project, including 7 Heritage trees. The final Oak Tree Mitigation Plan will identify the trees to be removed and provide for valuation and mitigation tree sizes, species, and location. Two additional trees are not included in this summary. Tree #17 is offsite within the shopping center on Arch Street and will remain in place. Tree #18 may be within the MWD ownership and, depending on the outcome of negotiations with MWD and the City approval of the Final Oak Tree Mitigation Plan, will either remain in place or be relocated to the Shadowbox Oak Park.

SUMMARY OF TREES: (See DEIR Appendix G "Protected Oak Tree Report" for photos & valuation information)

Coast Live Oak #1, Heritage (Grade C-)

This tree has 3 primary stems and appears to be in good health but contains significant structural defects. It appears that a large stem growing towards the east failed some time ago continuing to grow horizontally above the ground, this stem also contains a large cavity. It is also apparent that at least two large stems were removed from the tree, one leaving a decayed stump in the lower portion of the main stem creating a hazard. *Kerry Norman of Arbor Essence testified at the May 2023 Planning Commission that the tree is in danger of failure and poses a safety hazard. The tree is not a candidate for relocation.*

Coast Live Oak #2, Heritage (2021 Grade B – to be downgraded in final report)

This tree appeared to be in good health in 2021, but suffered a large stem failure in 2022 resulting in a loss of approximately 40% of the trees crown. Additionally the remaining portion has developed very poor branching structure with several codominant stems. The tree is located growing just down slope of a wash/drainage on the east perimeter of the property which will be filled in and channelized with a storm drain pipe as identified in the approved Drainage Plans and Hydrology Report for the Studio project. The tree is not a candidate for relocation.

Coast Live Oak #3, Heritage (Grade C-)

The tree appears to be in stable health; however the tree has suffered severe damage from fire leaving the trunk and scaffold limbs heavily scarred with areas of decay. The tree is considered high risk for limb failures. *In 2022 several limb failures occurred, further deteriorating the visual appearance and health of the tree. The tree is not a candidate for relocation.*

Coast Live Oak #4, Heritage (Grade D)

The tree appears to be in stable health; however the tree has suffered severe damage from fire leaving the trunk and scaffold limbs heavily scarred with areas of decay. A large stem failure has resulting in the loss of 50% of the trees crown. The tree is considered high risk for failure. *The tree is located in an area to be graded for the project and is not a candidate for transplanting.*

Coast Live Oak #5, Heritage (Grade D)

The tree appears to be in stable health; however the tree has suffered severe damage from fire leaving the trunk and scaffold limbs heavily scarred with areas of decay and the tree contains a large trunk cavity. This tree is considered a high risk for failure. *The tree is located in an area to be graded for the project and is not a candidate for transplanting.*

Coast Live Oak #6, Heritage (Grade B)

This tree is in good health with no apparent pest problems. Structure is fair. *However, this tree canopy is within the Metro/SCRRRA railroad tracks right of way. The trunk is located within a minor, seasonal drainage course which, due to the potential to impact the railroad right of way, will be filled in and channelized with a storm drain pipe as identified in the pending update to Drainage Plans and Hydrology Report for both the 13th Street Railroad Crossing and the Studio project. The tree is not a candidate for relocation.*

Valley Oak #7, Heritage (Grade D)

This tree appears to be in stable health but have significant structural and disease problems. The tree contains a large trunk wound that has been colonized by *Laetiporus*, a known wood decay fungi. Incipient decay was observed in the main trunk. The tree also displays a history of limb failures. This tree is considered to be a high risk for failure, as the disease and decay will only worsen over time. *The tree is located in an area to be graded for the project and is not a candidate for transplanting.*

Valley Oak #8 (Grade B)

This tree appears to be in stable health with moderate stress symptoms, probably drought induced. No apparent pest or major structural problems were observed in the tree. *The footprint of building b22 (parking structure) and b23 office building will impact the location of oak #8 and cannot be redesigned as it is critical to the functional operation of the entire facility. Oak #8 is proposed to be relocated to the Shadow Oak Park catering area.*

Valley Oak #9 (Grade B)

This tree appears to be in stable health with moderate stress symptoms, probably drought induced. No apparent pest or major structural problems were observed in the tree. *Oak #9 is located within the proposed 13th street extension area 13th Street/Dockweiler Drive project and was identified for removal in the prior Lyons Avenue/13th Street design and Certified EIR.*

Valley Oak #10 (Grade B)

This tree appears to be in stable health with moderate stress symptoms, probably drought induced. No apparent pest or major structural problems were observed in the tree. *Oak #10 is located within the proposed 13th street extension area 13th Street/Dockweiler Drive project and was identified for removal in the prior Lyons Avenue/13th Street design and Certified EIR.*

Coast Live Oak #11 (Grade C-)

This tree appears to be in stable healthy with moderate stress symptoms, probably drought induced. The tree has multiple codominant stems. There is a sizeable cavity at the base of the tree which contains a beehive. The basal trunk cavity creates a hazardous condition with likelihood of failure in the near future. *The tree is located in an area to be graded for the project and is not a candidate for transplanting.*

Coast Live Oak #12 (Grade C-)

This tree appears to be in stable health. Structure is very poor with the main stem growing horizontally along the ground to the northeast, there is also a basal cavity in the main stem. *The tree is located in an area to be graded for the project and is not a candidate for transplanting.*

Coast Live Oak #13 (Grade C-)

This tree appears to be in stable health but displays stress symptoms with dieback, probably drought induced. Structure is multiple codominant stems with included bark. *The tree is located in an area to be graded for the project and is not a candidate for transplanting.*

Coast Live Oak #14 (Grade D)

A portion of this tree appears to be in stable health. The tree is actually in a failing condition due to fire damage. Half the tree has failed and the main stems contain structural defects in the form of dried wood and cracking, there is also a beehive in trunk cavities. The tree is outside the main construction area and could be preserved as habitat. *This tree will remain in place.*

Coast Live Oak #15 (Grade D)

The tree appears to be in stable health but has been severely damaged by fire. The main stem contains a cavity in the crotch where main stems converge and the trunk is severely damaged. The tree is outside the main construction area and could be preserved as habitat. *This tree will remain in place.*

Coast Live Oak #16 (Grade D)

This tree does have a crown of healthy foliage; however the tree is in very poor condition. The tree is basically stump regrowth, contains a large trunk cavity with a beehive, and the tree is structurally failing. The tree is outside the main construction area and could be preserved as habitat. *This tree will remain in place.*



Shadowbox - Santa Clarita, CA

View B
5 Years Growth
CONCEPTUAL - DRAFT EXHIBIT





EXISTING CONDITION



PROPOSED VIEW

Shadowbox - Santa Clarita, CA

View C

10 Years Growth

VisionScape IMAGERY **CONCEPTUAL - DRAFT EXHIBIT**

A Visualization Firm

visionscapeimagery.com



EXISTING CONDITION



PROPOSED VIEW

Shadowbox - Santa Clarita, CA

View E

5 Years Growth

VisionScape

A Visualization Firm

visionscapeimagery.com

CONCEPTUAL - DRAFT EXHIBIT

