



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### ES-1 Introduction

This Master Environmental Impact Report (Master EIR) has been prepared by the Rio Hondo Community College (College) to assess the environmental consequences of the proposed Rio Hondo College Master Plan (Master Plan) and the subsequent projects described in the Master Plan. In order to meet the education needs of the Rio Hondo Community College District to the year 2012, a combination of new facilities, renovated facilities, parking and circulation improvements, and infrastructure is proposed in the Master Plan. The Rio Hondo Community College District Board of Trustees is the Lead Agency for approval of the Master Plan and its subsequent projects. The College completed an Initial Study for the Master Plan in January 2005 and determined that a Master EIR should be prepared (see Appendix A, *Notice of Preparation, Initial Study, and Scoping Comment Letters*).

An EIR is an informational document prepared to:

- Inform public agency decision makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effects of a project;
- Identify possible ways to minimize the significant environmental effects through “mitigation measures”; and
- Describe reasonable alternatives to the project, which would both meet most of the College’s objectives and substantially reduce environmental effects.

Preparation of a Master EIR is an alternative to preparing a Project Level EIR for a master plan that will form the basis for later decision-making. A Master EIR is intended to streamline the later environmental review of projects or approvals included within the Master Plan analyzed in the Master EIR. Accordingly, this MEIR, to the greatest extent feasible, evaluates the cumulative impacts, growth inducing impacts, and irreversible significant effects on the environment of the subsequent College projects. Upon certification of the Final Master EIR by the Rio Hondo College District Board, subsequent projects described in the Master Plan and Master EIR will be subject to only limited environmental review.

As result of the analysis undertaken in the Initial Study, and following consideration of the scoping comment letters received during the Master EIR scoping period, it was determined that the proposed project would either not result in significant impacts or would result in less than significant impacts with mitigation to the following issue areas: agricultural resources, cultural resources, land use and planning, mineral resources, population and housing and recreation resources (please refer to the Initial Study and scoping comment letters in Appendix A). No



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further analysis of those environmental resources is undertaken in this Master EIR. However, the Initial Study and Master EIR scoping process concluded that the Master Plan and subsequent projects do have the potential to result in significant impacts to seven environmental resource areas, which are the subject of the detailed analysis in this Master EIR:

- Aesthetics;
- Air Quality;
- Biological Resources;
- Geology and Soils;
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
- Noise;
- Traffic and Transportation;
- Utilities and Fire Protection; and
- Hydrology and Water Quality.

This Draft Master EIR was distributed to various federal, state, regional, and local government agencies and interested organizations and individuals for a 45-day public review and comment period. This Draft Master EIR was provided to the State Clearinghouse for distribution to responsible agencies. In addition, a public Notice of Availability of the Draft Master EIR was published in local newspapers and mailed directly to interested parties requesting the document. Electronic copies of the Draft Master EIR are available on the Rio Hondo College Web site at: <[www.riohondo.edu/planning/](http://www.riohondo.edu/planning/)>. Printed copies of the Draft Master EIR are available during the public review period at the following public libraries:

**Whittier Central Library**  
7344 S. Washington Avenue  
Whittier, CA 90602  
562-464-3450

Monday - Wednesday: 10:00 AM - 9:00 PM  
Thursday and Friday: 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM  
Saturday: 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM  
Sunday: Closed



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## **Whittwood Branch Library**

10537 Santa Gertrudes Avenue  
Whittier, CA 90603  
562-464-3470

Monday - Tuesday: 12:00 PM - 9:00 PM  
Wednesday - Thursday: 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM  
Friday - 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM  
Saturday: 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM  
Sunday - Closed

## **Rio Hondo College Library – Reference Desk**

3600 Workman Mill Road  
Whittier, CA 90601-1699  
563-908-3484

Monday – Thursday: 7:30 AM – 9:00 PM  
Friday: 7:30 AM – 1:00 PM  
Saturday: 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM  
Sunday: Closed

Written comments on this Draft Master EIR should be transmitted during the public review period to the College:

Dr. Andy Howard, Executive Director  
Planning & Development  
Rio Hondo College  
3600 Workman Mill Road  
Whittier, CA 90601-1699  
E-mail: [ahoward@riohondo.edu](mailto:ahoward@riohondo.edu)

Written comments provided by the public and public agencies will be evaluated, and written responses will be prepared for all comments received during the review period. Upon completion of the evaluation, a Final Master EIR will be prepared and provided to the Rio Hondo College Board of Trustees for certification of compliance with CEQA and for review and consideration as part of the decision-making process for the proposed Rio Hondo Master Plan.

## **ES-2 Proposed Project**

Rio Hondo College is located at 3600 Workman Mill Road in an unincorporated area of the County of Los Angeles north of the City of Whittier and east of the City of Pico Rivera, approximately one mile southwest of the intersection of the Pomona Freeway (SR-60) and the San Gabriel Freeway (I-605).



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The Rio Hondo College District serves the cities of Whittier, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs, El Monte, and South El Monte, as well as portions of Downey, La Mirada, La Puente, Industry, and unincorporated nearby portions of Los Angeles County. There are over 318,000 people residing in nearly 107,000 households served by the College. Initially designed to support an enrollment of 4,000 students, the campus today serves a student population of over 20,000. Campus enrollment is presently growing by approximately 2.5% per year. The Rio Hondo College Educational Master Plan anticipates continued growth to 35,000 students by 2012. Average daily attendance is approximately 10,000 students.

Rio Hondo College has defined the following goal and supporting objectives to meet the future needs of the Rio Hondo Community College District.

**Goal:** Adopt the Rio Hondo Master Plan to provide for expanded college facilities to meet the needs of the Rio Hondo Community College District to the year 2012.

**Objectives:** Rio Hondo College has identified five primary facility challenges that the college must meet in order to fulfill its mission:

1. Develop an additional 286,650 assignable square feet (ASF) of space (about a 35% increase) in classroom and laboratory space by 2012 to meet the academic needs of the College;
2. Consider Twenty-one (21) of the 31 existing buildings for replacement and \$65 million dollars in repairs to existing buildings;
3. Increase accessibility by providing approximately 2540 total parking spaces (new and existing), short term parking and drop off to serve transit, improved pedestrian circulation and access for compliance with the Americans with Disability Act, and improved amenities and food service within public spaces;
4. Improve backbone computer infrastructure to accommodate new technology and provide training facilities for vocational programs; and
5. Provide classes in new offsite community facilities to increase community access to higher education.

The proposed Rio Hondo Master Plan is an update of the College's current Master Plan. The need for the update is for the District to continue to provide a blueprint for expanded college facilities to meet the needs of the Rio Hondo Community College District to the year 2012. Since the completion of the *2002 Facilities Master Plan*, Rio Hondo College staff, Master Plan architects, engineers and environmental planners have been working to refine it, producing the *Vision Plan* in

2003. The current *Rio Hondo College Master Plan* has evolved from these two plans (Figure ES-1, *Campus Master Plan*).

In order to meet the challenges facing the College, a combination of new facilities, renovated facilities, improved recreation and athletic facilities, public spaces, parking and circulation improvements, support facilities and infrastructure, landscaping and off campus centers are proposed in the Rio Hondo College Master Plan. Implementation of the Master Plan would be guided by the Rio Hondo College *Campus Landscape Master Plan* and *Design Guidelines* which include building design principles, site planning, architecture and way-finding systems. The *Design Guidelines* also provide preliminary design concepts for each of the Rio Hondo Campus quads and other campus areas.

Build-out of the Rio Hondo College Master Plan would occur in phases contingent on campus priorities and funding availability. The precise locations and mix of proposed buildings will continue to evolve during implementation of the Master Plan. Upon certification of this Master EIR and approval of the Master Plan by the Rio Hondo College Board of Trustees, subsequent projects consistent with the Master Plan may be approved without further environmental review (Initial Studies would be prepared projects in the later Master Plan implementation phases). The costs to implement the Rio Hondo College Master Plan are estimated to total over \$300 million.

### **Master Plan Projects**

A sub-committee of the College District's Planning/Fiscal Council, the Project List Committee, organized the campus improvements proposed in the Master Plan based on several criteria:

- Impact on the instructional program;
- Logical sequencing of construction;
- Availability of funding; and
- Prioritization of need.

The projects included in the Master Plan are illustrated in Figure 2.4-1 and are listed below:

#### ***New North Entrance***

- Signalized entrance

#### ***Improved Central Drive Entrance***

- New sidewalks and crosswalks
- Standard traffic lanes
- Relocated Information Booth

### ***New Terrace Walk***

- A series of sloping walks and stairs connect the terraced parking lots to the core Campus

### ***New South Entrance***

- Signalized entrance
- Information Booth
- Automobile access to playing Fields – Access to P.E. Complex, and Lots A, B & C and the new transit plaza

### ***New Rio Hondo Parkway***

- Two lanes in each direction with a landscaped median
- New street lighting and signage

### ***New Transit Plaza***

- Provides central drop-off for automobiles, the Campus Tram, and municipal bus lines
- Provides direct access to new Student Services Building and major open spaces at the Campus core
- Potential parking structures if demand requires or to enhance pedestrian access to Quad areas

### ***Campus Core Projects***

#### **1. Seismic Performance Improvements**

- To: Administration, Rio Hondo Tower (former library), Science Building, and the Wray Theater Building
- Improvements will be tied to other renovation work

#### **2. Student Services Building**

- Located at the Campus front door
- Consolidates activities currently housed in several buildings
- Serves as a connector from transit drop-off to upper and lower Quads

#### **3. Library/Learning Resource Center (LRC)** (Note: previously approved and under construction)

- 94,000 SF of new reference, resource, and educational spaces on two levels
- Improved functionality and access
- Opens to existing lawn area (Pellissier Terrace)

#### **4. Administration Building**

- Additional classroom space and improved administrative spaces
- New Campus IT Center
- Improved connection to upper Quad
- Connection to Parking Lot F via a new elevator

#### **5. Rio Hondo Tower** (former Library)

- Reconfigured to provide additional classroom space
- Renovated to improve building system performance, safety and energy efficiency

#### **6. Academic Commons**

- Substantial number of new teaching and support spaces to meet projected demand
- Entrance further from Terrace Walk

#### **7. Arts Center**

- New studio gallery, administration, and support spaces for the visual arts programs
- Large multi-purpose campus commons assembly space

### **8. Wray Theater**

- Revised loading area to improve function and screen it from the transit area

### ***Central Quad Spaces***

#### **1. Upper Quad**

- Active outdoor space with stepped terraces, lawn, and paved areas
- Shaded by a canopy of trees
- Provides access to administration, classrooms, and Student Services

#### **2. Student Square**

- Central gathering and meeting space half way between the Upper and Lower Quads in elevation
- Connected to both by a series of generous steps that double as amphitheater-type seating
- Potentially connects directly to the Student Services Center that will serve the building and further animate the outdoor space

#### **3. Central Plaza**

- Located at the North end of the Lower Quad, the heart of the Campus
- Accessed by the central walk, ramp and steps leading from the "Student Square" and the Upper Quad
- Café will open onto the Plaza filled with tables, chairs, and a fountain
- Campus flagpoles will be located here

#### **4. Lower Quad**

- Accommodates large gatherings for programmed activities or small groupings on the lawn areas under the informal arrangements of shade trees
- Provides access to the Wray Theater Building, the Learning Center/LRC and the new Visual Arts Center

#### **5. Arts Quad**

- More intimate in scale than the other Campus Quad spaces
- Provides an excellent casual meeting and outdoor study space
- Access from the Lower Quad and the new passage between the Wray Theater Building and the new Visual Arts Center
- Provides access to the Wray Theater Building

### ***Applied Technology***

- Renovation to improve functionality and seismic performance

### ***Child Development Center***

- New Administration and Service Building
- New parking and arrival area

### ***Central Plant***

- Improves energy efficiency for all connected buildings

### ***Physical Education Complex***

- Renovated men's gymnasium, new lockers, gymnasium, and aquatic facility
- New automobile drop-off and parking (structures if demand requires) central to PE Complex and Athletic Fields
- Pedestrian Bridge over Rio Hondo Parkway linking play fields

### ***Athletic Fields***

- New grandstands at soccer field
- Reoriented softball field
- Pedestrian bridge over Rio Hondo Parkway
- New baseball field
- New drop-off
- Batting cage

### ***Administration of Justice***

- Renovated and remodeled training and classroom spaces

Projects described in the Rio Hondo College Master Plan will be developed in phases according to Rio Hondo College priorities and as project funding becomes available.

## **ES-3 Project Alternatives**

The Rio Hondo College Master Plan has evolved from previous planning studies, the 2002 Facilities Master Plan, and the 2003 Vision Plan. At each step in the planning process, Rio Hondo College has attempted to achieve most of the Rio Hondo College project objectives, while minimizing costs and increasing environmental protection. At the time of the Notice of Preparation of the EIR (January 4, 2005), three project alternatives, including the No Project Alternative required under CEQA, were identified for comparative analysis in this Master EIR. These alternatives are:

- Rio Hondo College Master Plan (the Proposed Project);
- Alternative Rio Hondo College Master Plan with full perimeter road; and
- No Project Alternative

These project alternatives are described and analyzed in Section 4.0 of this Master EIR. The result of this analysis concludes that the Rio Hondo College Master Plan, the Proposed Project, is the environmentally superior alternative.

The Alternative Rio Hondo College Master Plan with full perimeter road involves extensive grading, biological resource and air quality impacts that can be avoided through the selection and approval of the Proposed Project.

The No Project Alternative results in increased air quality impacts due to longer distance commuting of displaced students and increased impacts across multiple resource issue areas arising from piecemeal development of the existing campus that would occur without the Master Plan.

## ES-4 Environmental Impacts, Mitigation Measures, and Residual Impacts

The complete environmental impact analysis is contained in Section 3.0 of the Master Environmental Impact Report. For each environmental issue area identified in the Initial Study and EIR Scoping process to have potentially significant effects, the environmental setting is described, significance thresholds are presented, the environmental impact analysis is summarized including cumulative impacts, mitigation measures are provided and the residual impact level is stated. This impact analysis is summarized on the following pages in Table ES-4-1, *Summary of Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures*.

### ES-5 Areas of Controversy

There are no known areas of controversy associated with the adoption of the Rio Hondo College Master Plan. In response to the Notice of Preparation of the Master EIR and during the public scoping period the following issues were raised:

- Potential seismic activity due to presence of Whittier Fault;
- Increased traffic on Workman Mill Road;
- Noise along Workman Mill Road;
- Presence of hazardous materials on the Campus;
- Potential health effects due to proximity of the new Rio Hondo Parkway to the Child Care facility; and
- Availability of Fire Protection Resources.

### ES-6 Issues to be Resolved

The results of the environmental impact analysis conclude that the project will result in unavoidable significant environmental effects related to air quality due to cumulative regional exceedances of the State and federal  $\text{NO}_x$  emission standards from commuter traffic and unavoidable significant impacts related to traffic. The environmental impacts related to traffic are presented below. The Rio Hondo College Board of Trustees will be required to consider these significant impacts and determine if the benefits of the proposed project warrant accepting these impacts. If so, a Statement of Overriding Considerations will be required.

With respect to the traffic related impacts, with the implementation of the recommended mitigation measures, four of the seven, impacted intersections would be fully mitigated by the proposed project mitigations:

- ◆ Norwalk Boulevard/Whittier Boulevard
- ◆ Norwalk Boulevard/Beverly Boulevard
- ◆ Peck Road/Rooks Road
- ◆ NB 605 Ramps/Pellisier Place



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Three of the seven, impacted intersection would have unavoidable traffic impacts even with project mitigations:

- ◆ Workman Mill Road/Rose Hills Drive
- ◆ Workman Mill Road/Rose Hills Gate
- ◆ Peck Road/Workman Mill Road