



**City of Santa Ana**  
**20 Civic Center Plaza, Santa Ana, CA 92701**  
**Planning Commission Staff Report**  
**April 28, 2025**

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**Topic:** Conditional Use Permit No. 2025-10 – Footlab Orange County (400 W. Warner Avenue)

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Adopt a resolution approving Conditional Use Permit No. 2025-10 to allow an indoor sports facility and ancillary outdoor business activities, as conditioned.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Andres Cuenca with Stake Sports, LLC dba Footlab (“Applicant”), on behalf of A.R.E. Investment Company, LLC (“Property Owner”), is requesting approval of Conditional Use Permit (CUP) No. 2025-10 to allow an indoor soccer sports facility and to allow ancillary outdoor business activities at 400 W. Warner Avenue. The Applicant is making the request pursuant to Section 41-472.5 of the Santa Ana Municipal Code (SAMC), which requires Planning Commission review and approval of a CUP for an indoor sports facility. In addition, pursuant to SAMC Section 41-650, the Applicant is requesting modifications to regulations set forth in Section 41-482 of the SAMC. Specifically, Section 41-482(a) of the SAMC requires that all business activities for an indoor sports facility be conducted and located within an enclosed structure. Therefore, the Applicant is requesting a modification to this regulation to allow ancillary outdoor business activities.

Staff is recommending approval of the Applicant’s request because the proposed use is consistent with the General Plan land use designation as well as several General Plan goals and policies. The proposed use would help generate additional economic growth and stability in the City and would be an added amenity to the neighborhood. Moreover, the proposed use and site plan have been carefully designed to minimize any impacts to the surrounding community. Lastly, the project would provide an additional opportunity for recreation within an area of the City that is substantially underserved by existing parks and provides limited opportunities for soccer play and entertainment.

**DISCUSSION**

**Project Description**

The Applicant is proposing to occupy an existing 57,705-square-foot warehouse building with an indoor sports facility, called Footlab Orange County (“Footlab”). The facility would be geared towards soccer and would serve as a venue for soccer practice, soccer courses, training and events, with integrated data analysis and specialized training apparatus intended to strengthen player skills. The sports facility would include several

indoor soccer-based interactive stations where players of all ages and skill levels will be able to measure their technical abilities, train, and compete. The facility would also include amenities such as lounge areas, locker rooms, food and beverage areas, and a clothing/shoe store. Moreover, the facility would include ancillary outdoor training areas to include several fenced and/or netted soccer fields/stations. With the exception of a new 525-square-foot concession stand, no new gross floor area is proposed as part of the project.

To establish the sports facility, the Applicant is proposing a complete interior renovation of the warehouse building that includes demolition of existing interior walls, furnishing, fixtures, etc., and the construction of new partition walls, ADA restrooms, new paint and flooring, and new electrical, plumbing, and mechanical. The improvements would include floor space for a reception area, retail store, e-games area, offices, locker rooms, food and beverage/seating areas for special events, and the interactive soccer stations. As shown on the proposed floor plans, the indoor interactive stations include three soccer fields of varying sizes; skills testing areas for speed, precision, technique, kick power, vertical jumps, and free kicks; and areas for foot volley and “street” soccer (Exhibit 4).

The Applicant is also proposing various on-site and off-site improvements that include resurfacing of the parking lot, new parking lot striping, wrought iron perimeter fencing, trash enclosure, and improvements to lighting and landscaping. In addition, the site would be improved with a new 525-square-foot concession stand, 116 parking stalls, eight bicycle parking spaces, pedestrian drop-off areas, and lounge areas. Of the parking provided, 25 stalls would be designated as electric vehicle capable and four would be designated as electric vehicle charging stations (EVCS). The site would also be improved with ancillary outdoor soccer-based activity areas/pitches, including two soccer fields with 20-foot tall perimeter netting and 50-foot tall stadium lighting; three street soccer areas with 13-foot tall perimeter fencing and 20-foot tall lighting; and one foot-volley area with 13-foot tall perimeter fencing and 20-foot tall lighting. Off-site improvements would include removal of an existing driveway approach along Warner Avenue, new curb and gutters along both Warner Avenue and Birch Street, and reconstruction of two driveway approaches per City standards, two along Warner Avenue and the third along Birch Street.

The proposed exterior improvements reflect a contemporary industrial aesthetic, and incorporate a dark, high-contrast palette, including black-painted concrete walls, deep red metal panels, and sleek black aluminum louvers. Large expanses of glass and transparent guardrails introduce openness and visual connectivity, while respecting the building’s original character and introducing a modern design. These design elements and materials are also carried through to the proposed concession stand. As shown in the conceptual landscape plan (Exhibit 6), new landscaping and lighting would be installed around the northern and eastern perimeter of the site. Landscaping would include 24-inch box strawberry trees, 15-gallon camphor trees, 15-gallon ‘pink dawn’ trees, and 15-gallon ‘little gem’ low branch trees, as well as a variety of five-gallon shrubs including, but not limited to, paw pink flowers, kangaroo paw orange, rock purslane,

blutopia flax lily, and Mexican feather grass. Overall, the improvements would include solid construction materials that will ensure that the facility ages well for the duration of the building’s lifetime.

The proposed facility will host special events such as the Footlab Amateur League, corporate team-building programs, private reservations, and functions. Additionally, Footlab plans to recreate the excitement of major tournaments like the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) Club World Cup by organizing simulated events featuring the same teams, age groups, and schedules as the official competitions. The facility will operate daily from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and will offer walk-ins for individual challenges, group training sessions, and casual play opportunities. Moreover, the facility would feature a “grab-and-go” food concept, offering pre-packaged snacks, beverages, and light meals. Catered food services will be available for special events but no full-service kitchen will be present onsite. The sale of alcoholic beverages for on-premises consumption and live entertainment are not being requested at this time. Should the Applicant seek the ability to sell alcoholic beverages for on-site consumption, a separate CUP would be required pursuant to Section 41-196 of the SAMC. Moreover, should the Applicant seek live entertainment, an entertainment permit would be required for on-site entertainment pursuant to Section 11-6 of the SAMC. Additional information regarding the business operations are included as part of Exhibit 8 of this staff report.

**Table 1: Project and Location Information**

Item	Information	
Project Address and Council Ward	400 W. Warner Avenue – Ward 4	
Nearest Intersection	Warner Avenue and Birch Street	
General Plan Designation	Industrial (IND)	
Zoning Designation	Light Industrial (M1)	
Surrounding Land Uses	North	Esqueda Elementary School, Single-Family Residences, Unmanned Telephone Equipment Facility (AT&T Corporation)
	East	Industrial, Retail, Service, Eating Establishments
	South	Parking, Industrial
	West	Industrial/Warehousing
Property Size	5.18 acres (225,504 sq. ft.)	
Existing Site Development	The subject site is developed with a 57,705-square-foot industrial building and surface parking stalls.	
Use Permissions	Allowed with approval of a conditional use permit (CUP)	
Zoning Code Sections Affected	Use	SAMC Section 41-472.5 and 41-650
	Operational Standards	SAMC Section 41-482 (Indoor Sport Facility)

**Table 2: Development and Operational Standards**

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Required by SAMC</b>	<b>Provided</b>
Business Operations	All business activities shall be conducted and located within an enclosed structure.	All primary business activities will be conducted within an enclosed structure/interior. Outdoor activities will be limited to ancillary uses only. (Modification included as part of the overall request to the Planning Commission.)*
Outdoor Storage	Any outdoor storage of equipment or materials shall be fully screened by a decorative masonry block wall.	Complies: No outdoor storage proposed.
Hours of Operation	No indoor sport facility shall operate before 7:00 a.m. or after 10:00 p.m. on any day of the week.	Complies: Proposed operations within the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. daily
Parking	Two (2) parking spaces per 1,000 sq. ft. of gross floor area	Complies: 116 total parking stalls provided on the entire site.

\*Additional analysis provided in the *Project Analysis* section of this report.

### *Onsite Parking*

The SAMC includes off-street parking standards for entertainment and recreational uses (e.g., golf driving ranges, golf courses, bowling alleys, batting cages, sports arenas, etc.). However, the proposed use does not fit into any of the specific off-street parking categories for entertainment and recreational uses in the SAMC and is instead deemed *unspecified*. SAMC Section 41-1380 outlines the minimum off-street parking requirements for unspecified entertainment/recreation uses or indoor sport facilities which cannot reasonably be considered within the scope of any other section. Specifically, this code section requires two spaces for each 1,000 square feet of gross floor area, but in no case shall the parking be less than 20 spaces.

Applying the above-mentioned parking rate to the existing building's total gross floor area (57,705 square feet) results in 116 off-street parking stalls required for the use, which the project complies with. However, of the total gross floor area, 25,107 square feet is dedicated to internal circulation, storage, mechanical/equipment rooms, and restrooms, and not dedicated as an assembly area or as part of the proposed interactive stations. Therefore, the parking rate for the indoor operations was calculated on the usable assembly area of 32,598 square feet, resulting in only 66 off-street parking stalls being required.

The ancillary outdoor business activities would also be considered an *unspecified use*, pursuant to Section 41-1420 of the SAMC, as the SAMC does not provide a parking standard for ancillary outdoor business activities associated with an indoor sports facility. Pursuant to Section 41-1420, the Planning Director can determine the minimum off-street parking requirements for any use conducted outside of a building, which cannot reasonably be considered as within the scope of any other section of the SAMC. To more accurately capture the parking demands associated with the outdoor uses, recognized

national standards used in transportation planning and parking studies for assumed vehicle occupancy or AVO (i.e., how many people are in a car on average) were compared to the proposed occupant load of 84 individuals for the outdoor assembly areas, as described above and as shown in the site occupancy plan in Exhibit 5.

Specifically, the guidelines from the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) were utilized. The national standard for AVO is 1.7 persons per car, based on the FHWA Annual Average Vehicle Occupancy for Cars, Buses, and Trucks. This AVO factor is derived from the National Household Travel Survey (NTHS) data. For sporting events/uses, the FHWA provides a range of AVOs, from 2.3 to 3.0 persons per vehicle. For Orange County sporting events/uses, an AVO of 2.6 is typical. These standards were reviewed and verified by the City's Traffic Engineering Division. To be conservative, an assumption of an AVO of 2 persons per vehicle was used and determined that 42 additional parking spaces would be required for the ancillary outdoor activities. Therefore, the total parking required for the use is 108 parking spaces, including 66 parking spaces for the indoor operations and 42 spaces for the ancillary outdoor spaces. The project proposes 116 parking stalls, exceeding the required parking by eight spaces.

To address potential traffic circulation concerns, conditions of approval would require the Applicant establish a parking management plan ("PMP"), to ensure parking areas remain useable and open for customers to use during peak operational hours. The PMP would be implemented during any high/peak demand periods, as necessary, and to ensure that the operations do not cause a nuisance, hindrance, and/or problem with either on-site and/or off-site parking and/or circulation. The PMP will be required to be reviewed and approved by the Planning and Building Agency (PBA) and the City's Traffic Engineering Division. Most notably, the PMP would be required to establish a plan to implement the following measures:

- Implement an on-site two-lane vehicular queuing area, within parking attendant(s) directing drivers, for capacity of up to twenty (20) vehicles, to eliminate on-street vehicular queuing/stacking on either Warner Avenue or Birch Street;
- Create a designated drop-off zone with queuing capacity of approximately six (6) vehicles;
- Place parking attendant(s) and adequate signage, as necessary, at nearby sites to prevent patrons of the facility, from unauthorized parking on off-site private lots;
- Control vehicular access entering and exiting the site to ensure effective on-site vehicular circulation (i.e., preventing vehicular ingress from either Warner Avenue or Birch Street).

As noted in the Applicant's business narrative, the facility may host a variety of special events outside of the typical business operations that maximize the facility's utilization. These events may include, but are not limited to, hosting professional or semi-professional team training sessions, tournaments, VIP meet-and-greet events, collaborations with sponsors, product launches and demos, and watch-parties for the

FIFA Club World Cup Tournament in Summer of 2025 and the FIFA World Cup of 2026. The Applicant notes that certain special events may exceed 300 attendees. In these cases, the conditions of approval would require that the Applicant obtain approval of a Land Use Certificate (LUC) and/or special event permit, as applicable and as permitted by the City. Prior to the issuance of the first LUC, the Applicant would be required to provide a parking study and operational plan to address the increased demand for parking, security, and/or issues or impacts created by such events. In addition, the Applicant would be required to obtain a shared parking agreement for nearby off-site locations (businesses, schools, or churches) for over-flow parking.

Staff notes that due to the nature of the sports facility with variables in user demand, there is the possibility that parking issues may arise. In the event that the site cannot accommodate the parking demand at any given time, and to avoid generating a nuisance, hindrance, and/or problem with either on-site and/or off-site parking and/or circulation, the Applicant and/or Property Owner will be required to devise and implement a plan to relieve the situation. Moreover, the Applicant would be required to obtain off-site parking agreements for nearby off-site locations for over-flow parking during normal business operations, either for self-parking or through development of a valet parking program/plan. The off-site parking agreement will be required to be recorded with the Orange County Clerk Recorder and a copy provided to the Planning Division. In this case, the required overflow parking will be determined through a parking study to be reviewed and approved by the Planning Division and the City's Traffic Engineering Division.

### **Project Background**

The project's site was developed in 1957 as a warehouse building for Sears, Roebuck and Company, commonly known as Sears. The facility was part of a nationwide emphasis on service and included a new filing system, record-keeping rooms, and classrooms for instruction of Sears' employees, while the facility would also be utilized as a dispatch center for servicemen to individual sites where homeowners were in need of repair for their appliances. The building remained as a Sears facility until 2019, with the most recent iteration of the business operating as a *Sears PartsDirect*, a physical parts and repair center which began selling appliance parts in 1995. The building has remained vacant since Sears' departure in 2019.

Ordinance No. NS-2776 established "Indoor Sports Facilities" as a conditionally permitted use in the Light Industrial (M1) zoning district in 2008. Prior to the adoption of this ordinance, indoor sports and recreation were combined with indoor entertainment and were only permitted in the City's commercial zones with a conditional use permit. The large space requirements necessary to operate indoor sports facilities in combination with higher lease rates in commercial areas resulted in a majority of indoor sports businesses not being able to locate in Santa Ana. In response to the growing demand for recreational activities and the limited park area provided within the City, the City Council amended the Municipal Code to allow indoor sports facilities within the M1 zoning district, subject to certain development standards and with a conditional use permit.

The Applicant submitted Development Project Application No. 2024-20 (DP No. 2024-20) in September 2024. Since that time, the Applicant has worked with City staff to address various concerns related to on-site and off-site improvements and development standards. In response to City concerns, the Applicant made several site plan changes, with the final site plan design presented as part of this CUP request.

Footlab is a sports technology company specializing in soccer training through innovative technology and personalized solutions. It was founded in 2016 by Rui Costa, a Portuguese former professional soccer player. The company is headquartered in Portugal. Footlab's proprietary software and hardware provide precise, biomechanically relevant motion capture data, offering unique sports analysis applicable to both professional and amateur athletes. Moreover, Footlab offers a comprehensive system for engaging, monitoring, and evaluating football players' skills, measuring technique, speed, precision, and reaction times. Footlab has four facilities worldwide, with the first facility established in Carnaxide, Lisbon, Portugal. Future facility locations include Toronto and London, Ontario, Bahrain, and Oslo, Norway. If approved and constructed, the proposed Footlab in Santa Ana would be the first in the United States.

### **Project Analysis**

CUP requests are governed by Section 41-638 of the SAMC. CUPs may be granted when it can be shown that the proposed project will not adversely impact the community. If these findings can be made, then it is appropriate to grant the CUP. Conversely, the inability to make these findings would result in a denial. Moreover, pursuant to Section 41-472.5 of the SAMC, indoor sports facilities in the M1 zoning district require discretionary review and approval of a CUP by the Planning Commission. In addition, pursuant to Section 41-650 of the SAMC, the Planning Commission may modify the regulations set forth for the district in which a project is located, when it is considered that strict enforcement of said regulations will cause undue hardship to the Applicant.

Staff has reviewed the Applicant's request and has determined that the proposed indoor sports facility will not be detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of the community. With the exception that all business activities be conducted and located within an enclosed structure, the proposed project meets the requirements specified in Section 41-482 of the SAMC and is in compliance with the M1 development standards, including landscaping and parking. The subject site is surrounded by industrial land uses, and the project is not expected to create secondary impacts related to operations, parking, lighting, or noise to the surrounding community or any sensitive land uses. In addition, conditions of approval have been included for this project that will ensure it remains in compliance with the indoor sports facilities section the SAMC and does not become an attractive nuisance or disrupt the surrounding land uses.

Staff has also reviewed the Applicant's request to modify the requirements outlined in Section 41-482 of the SAMC to allow ancillary outdoor business activities. Given the unique spatial demands of soccer and the substantial logistical and financial related

challenges posed by requiring that all business activities be conducted and located within an enclosed structure, staff has determined that there would be an undue hardship to the Applicant and recommends relief be provided from the standards. Therefore, staff is recommending that the Planning Commission modify the requirements outlined in Section 41-482 of the SAMC as part of the CUP approval to allow ancillary business activities outdoors. Staff provides additional analysis below.

### *Outdoor Business Operations*

In staff's analysis of the proposed use, requiring all business activities to be conducted and located within an enclosed structure would cause an undue hardship to the Applicant due to the soccer field size requirements and related disproportionate economic burden. Soccer requires a playing surface far larger than what is practical or economically feasible for most indoor facilities. Pursuant to FIFA regulations, a standard outdoor soccer field for adult play measures between 100 to 130 yards (300 to 390 feet) in length and 50 to 100 yards (150 to 300 feet) in width. Even scaled-down youth or recreational fields require substantial square footage. Moreover, the ceiling heights, wall structures, and floor loads of most indoor structures are not designed to accommodate such expansive and dynamic play areas, particularly in densely populated urban areas like Santa Ana, where industrial space is limited and expensive.

As designed, the Applicant proposes three interior soccer fields, two at approximately 52 feet by 81 feet and the third at approximately 53 feet by 112 feet. In addition, the applicant proposes two additional outdoor soccer fields both at approximately 102 feet by 165 feet. All proposed fields are substantially smaller in size than the standard outdoor soccer field, yet they still cannot be accommodated entirely within an enclosed structure. Moreover, outdoor soccer fields provide affordable, flexible, and inclusive spaces for youth and adult leagues, family recreation, and community engagement. Limiting a widely played sport to indoor settings would restrict participation, particularly for those without the financial means or transportation access to reach more limited and privatized indoor venues, ultimately limiting the viability of Applicant's business.

### *Conditional Use Permit No. 2025-10*

The proposed indoor sports facility is consistent with the intent of the Light Industrial (M1) zoning district, which allows limited commercial or recreational uses that do not interfere with industrial operations or adversely impact adjacent properties. The adaptive reuse of the building for recreation supports the City's efforts to revitalize underutilized industrial corridors, particularly along Warner Avenue, where a mix of light manufacturing, warehousing, and service-oriented businesses coexist. The nearest sensitive land uses are single-family residential homes and Esqueda Elementary School, which are located approximately between 100 to 200 feet to the north and northwest of the site. The building's existing location and the proposed site design would lessen the potential impacts to the sensitive receptors, given that the primary uses would be entirely enclosed, with no sound amplification that could contribute to off-site noise. Moreover, the peak



operational hours are expected to begin in the late afternoon and extend into the evening, thereby avoiding conflict with school hours and minimizing potential impacts on residential quality of life.

The outdoor field uses are designed to be located furthest away from the sensitive receptors, approximately between 400 to 600 feet to the north and northwest. Moreover, they would be located on the south and southeast side of the existing building, further buffering the residential and school uses. Although the hours of operations are proposed between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m., the peak hours would occur in the late afternoon and evening, allowing the facility to operate without interfering with school activities or peak industrial operating hours in the surrounding area. In addition, this flex scheduling strategy reduces overlap with nearby industrial traffic and supports a balanced use of the site. To address lighting concerns, staff is recommending a condition of approval requiring that all outdoor field lights utilize full-cutoff, shielded LED fixtures designed to minimize glare and eliminate upward or off-site light spill. A photometric study has been provided to demonstrate compliance with City standards and to ensure that no measurable lighting impact extends across Warner Avenue to residential or school uses (Exhibit 7).

Regarding noise, staff is recommending a condition of approval requiring that outdoor activities be limited to recreational gameplay and non-amplified announcements, with no use of loudspeakers or sound systems after 9:00 p.m. on weekdays and 10:00 p.m. on weekends. Vehicle access and parking are proposed along the north and east side of the property. However, the proposed landscaped buffers along the northern property edge would buffer the residential and school uses and mitigate any sound transmission. Given that Footlab's busiest hours will occur after traditional business hours of the surrounding industrial users, the facility is expected to complement rather than conflict with nearby land uses. With the operational safeguards, design features, and conditions of approval in place, the project is not anticipated to result in significant impacts to public health, safety, or general welfare, and remains compatible with the surrounding context, including residential areas and Esqueda Elementary School.

A California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Class 32 Categorical Exemption memorandum was prepared by T&B Planning, the applicant's environmental consultant. The purpose of the memorandum was to determine if the project would result in any significant environmental impacts and whether the project met the conditions of a Class 32 exemption. This memorandum was reviewed by City staff. Upon review, it was determined that the project would not result in any significant environmental impacts related to traffic, air quality and greenhouse gas emissions, and noise.

#### General Plan Consistency

Approval of the proposed project is consistent with the General Plan land use designation of Industrial (IND), which allows for a broad range of employment, light manufacturing, and commercial-supportive uses. Footlab would introduce a compatible, community-serving amenity within a primarily industrial corridor, while also providing opportunities for

economic activation and recreational engagement. Furthermore, approval of this project would be consistent with several goals and policies of the General Plan, specifically Goals 1, 2, and 3 of the Land Use (LU) Element, Goals 1 and 3 of the Economic Prosperity (EP) Element, Goals 1 and 2 of the Open Space (OS) Element, Goal 1 of the Community (CM) Element, Goal 1 of the Noise (N) Element, and Goal 2 of the Urban Design (UD) Element. Specifically, the project would help generate additional economic growth and stability in the City, and would provide for recreation within an area of the City that is underserved by existing parks. Moreover, the proposed use and site plan have been carefully designed to minimize any impacts to the surrounding community. A complete analysis on the general plan consistency is provided in Exhibit 11.

### **Public Notification and Community Outreach**

Project notifications were posted, published, and mailed in accordance with City and State regulations. Copies of the public notice, including a 1,000-foot notification radius map, and the site posting are provided in Exhibit 12. The project site is not located within a designated neighborhood, but is adjacent to the Sunwood Central Neighborhood, Santa Ana Memorial Park Neighborhood, and the Delhi neighborhood associations. Staff contacted the presidents of the neighborhood associations to identify any areas of concerns due to the proposed application request. At the time this report was printed, no issues of concern were raised regarding the proposed CUP.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines, the project is exempt from further review, pursuant to Section 15332 (Class 32) of the CEQA Guidelines (In-Fill Development Projects), because the project is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and applicable general plan policies, as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations. Moreover, the proposed development occurs within the City limits on a project site of no more than five acres; the project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species; approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality; and the site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services. The above-mentioned analysis and use of a Class 32 categorical exemption is substantiated by the analysis provided as Exhibit 10 of this report. Based on this analysis, a Notice of Exemption, Environmental Review No. 2024-98, will be filed for this project.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this action.

### **EXHIBITS**

1. Resolution
2. Vicinity Zoning and Aerial View
3. Site Photos

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4. Architectural Plans
5. Site Occupancy Plan
6. Conceptual Landscape Plan
7. Photometric Plan
8. Footlab OC Business Narrative
9. Focused Traffic Analysis
10. CEQA Class 32 Exemption Memo
11. General Plan Consistency Findings
12. Copy of Public Notices

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