

3A. Aesthetics

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the potential aesthetic (or visual resource) impacts associated with the proposed project. This chapter includes a discussion of the qualitative aesthetic characteristics of the existing environment that would be potentially degraded by the implementation of the proposed project, and the consistency of the proposed project with established visual resources policies relevant to the project. An analysis of potential lighting effects is also provided.

SETTING

Regional Character

Scenic qualities are highly subjective, and depend on the perceptions of the individual viewer. Los Angeles County has a variety of scenic resources, including a mixture of different topography, flora and fauna. The Los Angeles region is characterized by a variety of topographic features and native vegetation and includes such diverse areas as the Coastal Lowlands, the Central Mountains and the Northern Desert.

The proposed project site is located in a predominantly urbanized area that includes a mix of land uses such as light industrial, commercial, residential and vacant lots. In general, the region is dominated by typical urban characteristics such as shopping centers, residential neighborhoods, schools, light industrial businesses and freeways and smaller arterial roadways.

Onsite and Surrounding Visual Elements

Existing Site Area

The proposed project site is located immediately southeast of the intersection of Gladstone Street and Lone Hill Avenue in the City of San Dimas (see Chapter 2, Figure 2-2). The site is predominantly flat with existing structures located along the southern and eastern portions of the project site. The City of San Dimas General Plan currently designates the site as Industrial.¹ The proposed project site consists of 22.83 acres spread over 47 separate parcels, ranging in level of development from undeveloped and single-family residential to commercial/light industrial. West 5th Street, to be removed as part of the proposed project, extends across the southern portion of the proposed project site, east of Lone Hill Avenue. The proposed project site is currently occupied by the following: vacant parcels with scattered trees and vegetation; single-family residences; an office building; an auto repair shop; and, light industrial businesses. Currently, over 50 percent of the proposed project site is vacant undeveloped land. This vacant portion of the proposed project site is dominated by landscaped and ornamental vegetation.

¹ City of San Dimas, *General Plan – Land Use Map*, 1991.

Surrounding Area

Three different cities and a section of unincorporated Los Angeles County are located within a 1-mile radius of the proposed project site. The city of San Dimas is located to the east and south of the proposed project site, and the cities of Covina and Glendora are located to the west and north, respectively, of the proposed project site. A County unincorporated area is located further southwest of the project site.

The proposed project site is located in an area with primarily low-density residential and mixed commercial/light industrial uses (see Chapter 3H, Figure 3H-1). Adjacent properties across Lone Hill Avenue include 16 1-story single-family residences and a Chevron gas station to the west and large retail commercial uses (including Sam's Club, Kohl's, Home Depot, Verizon Wireless Store, Wendy's, etc.) to the northwest. Adjacent properties to the north (across Gladstone Street) include eight one-story single-family residences, commercial businesses and light industrial businesses. Adjacent properties to the east include several 1-story single-family residences, the 57 Freeway, and several commercial properties. A corporate business park is located south of the proposed project site.

Nearby sensitive receptors include the single-family residential developments that surround the proposed project site. These residential developments were constructed as early as 1952. Other adjacent facilities with sensitive receptors located within a 1-mile radius of the proposed project site include the Shull Elementary School and the Gladstone Elementary School. Other sensitive receptors that could be affected by the project within a 1-mile radius of the site include additional residences and Lone Hill Park.

Light and Glare

The proposed project site currently produces minimal light in the area. The residences along the southern portion of the site have minimal nighttime lighting, primarily for security purposes. Similarly, the surrounding commercial and office buildings and single-family units produce low-level light and glare. The major nighttime light sources are from street lights, area buildings, security lighting, and parking lot lighting.

Existing Viewers

Viewer sensitivity or concern is based, in part, on the visibility of resources in the landscape, the proximity of viewers to the visual resources, the relative elevation of viewers to the visual resources, the frequency and duration of views, the number of viewers, and the types and expectations of the individuals and viewer groups. Generally, visual sensitivity increases with an increase in total number of viewers, the frequency of viewing, and the duration of views. However, visual sensitivity is generally higher for views seen by people who are driving for pleasure, engaging in recreational activities, or who are homeowners. Sensitivity is generally lower for people commuting to and from work.

As indicated above, the proposed project site is located in an urban area surrounded by a mix of uses including residential, commercial, retail and office space in the City of San Dimas. Figures 3A-1 through 3A-6 demonstrate the existing visual character of the proposed project site and the



SOURCE: Environmental Science Associates, 2002.

Costco Commercial Complex / 202349 ■

Figure 3A-1

View of adjacent residences looking east along Gladstone Street from eastern edge of the proposed project site.



SOURCE: Environmental Science Associates, 2002.

Costco Commercial Complex / 202349 ■

Figure 3A-2

View of the G. Vella Construction Company located on the northeast portion of the proposed project site.



SOURCE: Environmental Science Associates, 2002.

Costco Commercial Complex / 202349 ■

Figure 3A-3

View of the proposed project site looking southeast from the corner of Gladstone Street and Lone Hill Avenue.



SOURCE: Environmental Science Associates, 2002.

Costco Commercial Complex / 202349 ■

Figure 3A-4

View of the Glendora Marketplace shopping complex located northwest of the proposed project site looking northwest from the corner of Gladstone Street and Lone Hill Avenue.



SOURCE: Environmental Science Associates, 2002.

Costco Commercial Complex / 202349 ■

Figure 3A-5

View of the single-family residences located along the southern edge of the proposed project site facing southeast from the intersection of Lone Hill Avenue and West 5th Street.



SOURCE: Environmental Science Associates, 2002.

Costco Commercial Complex / 202349 ■

Figure 3A-6

View of single-family residences located west of the proposed project site across Lone Hill Avenue, looking northwest from Lone Hill Avenue and West 5th Street.

surrounding area. From the project site facing north towards Gladstone Street, there is a 3-story office building and 1-story single-family homes. Also facing north from the site, the San Gabriel Mountains are visible in the distance. Facing south from the site, there is a tilt-up industrial business complex (1-story and 2-story) across from West 5th Street. West 5th Street will be removed as a part of the proposed project and the space will be incorporated into the proposed project design (see Chapter 2, Figure 2-3). From the project site facing east, the view includes railroad tracks, which will be included in the MTA Gold Line commuter light rail extension. Just beyond the tracks are 1-story single-family homes and an elevated (bridge) portion of the 57 Freeway (formerly the I-210).² From the site facing west, there are several 1-story single-family homes and a Chevron gas station at the intersection of Lone Hill Avenue and Gladstone Street. Facing northwest from the site there is the back end of a retail strip mall, which is a small portion of a larger shopping complex, known as the Glendora Marketplace. This shopping complex, located within the City of Glendora, includes a combination of big box retail (Sam's Club, Kohl's, Home Depot), small retail (clothing stores, Verizon Wireless Store, etc.), and food service (Wendy's, etc.) uses.

APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

City of San Dimas General Plan

The Land Use Element to the City of San Dimas General Plan, adopted in September 1991, maintains a number of policies that are concerned with preserving scenic and visual resources. In accordance with the General Plan, all new development should be evaluated with respect to the potential impacts to visual resources that may result from the proposed change.

The goals and policies of the City of San Dimas General Plan that apply to the proposed project include³:

Goal L-9: Enhance a unified and a high quality visual image for the City.

Objective 9.1: Preserve the visual identity and character of existing neighborhoods.

Policy 9.1.1: *Underground utilities to improve the visual environment.*

Policy 9.1.2: *Beautify the existing railroad rights-of-way.*

Policy 9.1.3: *Direct future development in a cohesive manner and promote the visual identity of the City's important districts such as the town Core, Civic Center, and Downtown.*

Policy 9.1.5: *Preserve important view corridors.*

² Tanaka, R. (2002). Freeway section gets name change: Sliver of 210 becomes 57 Freeway. *Inland Valley Bulletin*. [online: <http://www.dailybulletin.com/cda/article/print/0,1674,203%257E26082%257E1006201,00.html>]

³ City of San Dimas. *General Plan – Land Use Element*, 1991.

City of San Dimas Specific Plan No. 24

Specific Plan No. 24 for the City of San Dimas sets forth specific development requirements with respect to landscaping and monumentation at the proposed project site because the proposed project site provides the greatest opportunity within Area No. 24 for a “view window” into the City.⁴ Any development of the proposed project site would be required to adhere to the landscaping and monumentation setback requirements and general landscaping requirements of the City’s Specific Plan No. 24.

City of San Dimas Tree Preservation Ordinance

The City of San Dimas Tree Preservation Ordinance (San Dimas Municipal Code, Section 18.162) required permits for the removal of mature trees and mitigation where the removals are approved.

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

Methodology

Characterizing aesthetics can be highly subjective; therefore, the evaluation of aesthetic resources in the landscape requires the application of a process that objectively identifies the visual features of the landscape and their importance, and the sensitivity of receptors that view them. Sensitive receptors that have views of the project site are first identified and the relative importance of these views is determined. The project-related changes to the aesthetic character of the site and surrounding area are identified and qualitatively evaluated based on the modification of the physical conditions and the viewer sensitivity. The project-related impacts are compared to the context of the existing setting using the threshold criteria discussed below. A policy analysis also is conducted to determine the project’s consistency with relevant planning regulations and general plan goals, objectives, and policies.

Light and glare impacts also are determined through a comparison of the existing light sources with the proposed lighting plan. If the project has the potential to generate spill light on adjacent sensitive receptors, or generate glare to receptors in the vicinity of the site, mitigation measures will be required to reduce potential impacts. Mitigation measures to address spill light and glare are discussed where applicable.

Criteria for Determining Significance

The criteria used to determine the significance of a potential impact are based on the model initial study checklist contained in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines. The proposed project may result in a significant impact if it would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;

⁴ City of San Dimas, *Municipal Code – Chapter 18.540, Specific Plan No. 24.*

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- Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
 - Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings;
 - Conflict with established plans or policies concerning visual resources; or,
 - Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Project Impacts

Impact 3A1: The proposed project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, damage scenic resources and/or degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site.

The proposed project site is located in an urban area that includes a mix of land uses such as office, commercial, residential and vacant lots. The proposed project site is flat and predominantly vacant with scattered amounts of ornamental vegetation and landscaping throughout the site. Approximately 120 ornamental and landscaping trees are scattered throughout the proposed project site and would be removed as part of the proposed project. Several structures that are used for residential, commercial, and light industrial purposes are located along the southern portion of the site and would be removed as part of the proposed project. The proposed project site is not located within a scenic vista, nor would development on the proposed project site obstruct the view of any scenic vistas.

Much of the City of San Dimas is designed in the “Early California Village” architectural theme that was adopted by the City for the downtown area in the 1970s.⁵ The City of San Dimas, through General Plan and Specific Plan amendments, is currently contemplating the adoption of a policy that will place an “Early California Village” theme design mandate for all future developments within the city limits. The development of the proposed project site would occur in a manner consistent with the “Early California Village” theme (See Figure 3A-7). The utilization of the “Early California Village” theme would reflect the surrounding developments, improve the existing visual character or quality of the site, and address neighborhood compatibility.

There are existing overhead utility lines along both the Gladstone Street and Lone Hill Avenue project site frontages. The proposed project may add some overhead lines for major distribution utilities. However, as outlined in mitigation measure **M-3A.1** below, the City’s General Plan

⁵ City of San Dimas, Planning Department. <http://www.cityofsandimas.com/html/planning.htm> Accessed on 10 June 2003.

policy to provide underground utilities, whenever possible, would be implemented to improve the visual environment. Therefore, a significant impact is not anticipated.

In addition, the proposed project involves additional landscaping and ornamental vegetation consistent with that currently existing at the site. Many of the existing trees at the proposed project site that would be removed as part of the proposed project would also be replaced.

Landscaping trees located along the center divider at Lone Hill Avenue would continue to obstruct views of single-family residences west of the project from the proposed project. Therefore, the visual character of the site is being preserved through design features and ornamental landscaping, and the proposed project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character of the site. With the inclusion of mitigation measures **M-3A.2** through **M-3A.4**, this impact would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

M-3A.1 *In accordance with the City of San Dimas General Plan, underground utilities shall be provided in an effort to improve the visual environment.*

M-3A.2 *Proposed ornamental landscaping shall include replacing existing mature trees with trees of similar scale in an effort to preserve the visual character of the project area.*

M-3A.3 *In conjunction with consideration of grading and site plan approvals, the applicant shall inventory existing trees by size, species, location and condition. Where feasible after consideration of grading requirements, existing trees in good condition deemed appropriate for retention shall be protected in place and preserved. Trees approved for removal shall be replaced pursuant to the standards set forth in the San Dimas Municipal Code Chapter 18.162.*

M-3A.4 *Prior to the issuance of a grading permit for the proposed project, the applicant shall obtain a Tree Removal Permit from the City of San Dimas, as required by San Dimas Municipal Code Section 18.162.*

Residual Impacts

Less than significant.

Impact 3A2: The proposed project would be consistent with established plans or policies concerning visual resources.

The proposed project would utilize an “Early California Village” architectural design for the exterior of the structures within the proposed project in order to reflect the surrounding developments and address neighborhood compatibility. In addition to using a standard big-box development design, the proposed project has been designed to reflect the western cultural and design heritage of the City of San Dimas. As mentioned above, the City adopted the “Early

California Village” architectural theme for the downtown area and is currently contemplating the adoption of a policy that will place an “Early California Village” theme design mandate for all future developments within the city limits. The proposed project would adhere to all landscaping and monumentation requirements of Specific Plan No. 24 for the proposed project site. Therefore, the design of the proposed project would be consistent with existing and future design guidelines as determined by the City of San Dimas Department of Community Development. This would represent a less than significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required.

Residual Impacts

Less than significant.

Impact 3A3: The proposed project would not create significant new sources of light or glare that could affect surrounding uses.

Development of the proposed project site with a Costco commercial complex would be anticipated to increase light and glare at the project site, which would be noticeable from surrounding uses and nearby roadways, including the 57 Freeway. The proposed project would implement general low-level nighttime building lighting, security lighting, and landscape lighting. Lighting on the project site would be detectable from the surrounding areas. However, the proposed project site is located in an urbanized area and development of the site with the Costco commercial complex would be consistent with existing development in the area. In addition, as with any development within the limits of the City of San Dimas, the project would be subject to the lighting guidelines of the City of San Dimas. Therefore, with the inclusion of the following mitigation measure, potential light and glare impacts associated with the proposed project would be less than significant. Using high-pressure sodium light bulbs with light fixtures angled down and away from nearby residences, this impact can be deemed less than significant. These lights are necessary in the proposed project for substantially increasing public safety.

Mitigation Measures

M-3A.5 *The applicant shall install high-pressure sodium light fixtures that do not exceed 250 watts, however, landscape and accent lighting may exceed this limitation, if necessary. Light standards that maintain light emissions close to 90 degrees horizontal shall be selected. Shielding shall be implemented to reduce light emissions onto adjoining properties. The overall height of the light pole and fixture shall not exceed 15 feet, and poles shall be steel, aluminum or other similar approved material. The style of the poles shall compliment the fixture design. All architectural accent and ground lighting fixtures shall be subterranean unless the fixture is designed as an architectural element.*

M-3A.6 *As per the City of San Dimas Lighting Guidelines, the applicant shall submit a lighting plan for approval by the City of San Dimas.*

Residual Impacts

Less than significant.

Impact 3A4: Together with other area projects, the proposed project would not have cumulative aesthetic impacts.

This analysis is based on the Cumulative Projects List provided in Chapter 2. The listed projects include commercial/mixed-use and residential projects located within two miles of the project site that are currently under construction, approved but not built, or proposed for development. The proposed project, as well as the nearby projects, can be considered infill development. This development is occurring in an area that has already been highly impacted by urban development and most, if not all, projects will be built on sites that have already been developed in the past. The development of the proposed would be aesthetically consistent with the character and level of development in the area. Therefore, the proposed project, in conjunction with the listed projects, will have no cumulative impacts on aesthetics in the area.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required.

Residual Impacts

Impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.