

5. Environmental Analysis

5.1 AESTHETICS

This section of the Draft Environmental Report (DEIR) discusses the potential impacts to the visual character of the Project Site and its surroundings associated with implementation of the Proposed Project. This section also includes a discussion of the qualitative aesthetic characteristics of the environment that could be potentially degraded by the project's implementation, as well as the potential for new development to increase light and glare in areas with sensitive land uses, such as residences. The information presented in this section is based on field reconnaissance, review of the Project Site and aerial photographs, and graphic representation of the project as presented in the Midtown Specific Plan.

5.1.1 Environmental Setting

5.1.1.1 REGULATORY BACKGROUND

Local laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines that are applicable to the Proposed Project are summarized below.

City of Long Beach Municipal Code

The City of Long Beach Municipal Code identifies land use categories, development standards, and other general provisions that ensure consistency between the City's General Plan and proposed development projects. The following provisions from the City's Municipal Code help minimize visual and light and glare impacts associated with new development projects and are relevant to the Proposed Project.

- **Section 21.41.259 (Parking Areas – Lighting).** All parking lots and garages are required to be illuminated with lights directed and shielded to prevent light and glare from intruding onto adjacent sites. The light standards shall not exceed the height of the principal use structure or one foot for each two feet of distance between the light standard and the nearest property line, whichever is greater.
- **Section 21.44.855 (Light and Glare Intrusion Prevention).** Any electronic message center signs shall be adequately shielded and properly oriented and aimed so as to prevent the intrusion of light and glare upon residential land uses, including those in mixed-use districts.
- **Section 21.44.600 (Prohibited Signs).** Floodlights that are not hooded or shielded so that the light source is visible from public right-of-way, adjacent property, or residential dwelling unit are prohibited.

5.1.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Visual Character

Long Beach Boulevard is a major north-south thoroughfare through the City and links the inland Long Beach neighborhoods to the ocean. The Proposed Project covers Long Beach Boulevard from Wardlow Road on the north to Anaheim Street on the south and extends about two to three blocks to the east and west within the Corridor District and five to six blocks to the east and west within the Transit Node District. Nearly the entire length of Long Beach Boulevard within the Project Site has mature street trees lining the medians, and

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sidewalks (with varied landscaping) extend along both sides of Long Beach Boulevard throughout the entire length of the Project Site. As shown in Figure 3-3, *Aerial Photograph*, the Metro Blue Line light rail runs along almost the entire length of Long Beach Boulevard within the Project Site. The light rail consists of various infrastructure improvements, including overhead power lines, metal tracks, and raised platforms.

The visual character of the Project Site and its surrounding along the Long Beach Boulevard corridor is highly urbanized and built out with a mixture of commercial, medical, and residential uses. The predominant land uses include single- and multifamily homes, small- to medium-sized retail and service establishments, medical and research offices, hospitals, and diagnostic centers. There are also several schools and parks within the Project Site. Additional single-family neighborhoods and apartment complexes, as well as some commercial uses, surround the Project Site.

The immediate uses fronting onto Long Beach Boulevard are mainly one- to two-story commercial businesses and their associated landscaping and surface parking lots: other uses include auto-oriented services throughout; medical uses, mostly along the northern portion of the boulevard; a few high-density (four story) residential projects throughout; some single-family residences and apartments along the northern portion of the boulevard; and a few vacant lots. The architectural character along Long Beach Boulevard generally consists of boxy, single-story buildings with clean facades and signage. There is no consistent architectural theme throughout the Project Site.

Landform

The terrain within the Project Site and its surrounding areas is flat. Overall, there is little change in elevation throughout the Project Site.

Light and Glare

Excessive light and glare can negatively affect sensitive land uses when those uses are placed close to land uses that have outdoor lighting or are made from materials that reflect light. Existing sources of light and glare throughout the Project Site include building (interior and exterior), security, sign illumination, and parking-area lighting. For example, the medical use area near Long Beach Memorial Medical Center is well-lit inside and out during both day and night. In addition, nighttime light and glare include street lights and vehicular traffic along Long Beach Boulevard and its surrounding roadways (e.g., I-405, Willow Street, Spring Street, and Pacific Coast Highway), as well as nighttime light from the Metro Blue Line. A significant amount of ambient lighting comes from surrounding communities and roadways as well. Areas within the vicinity of the Project Site that have less light and glare include residential land uses and Veterans Memorial Park.

5.1.2 Thresholds of Significance

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project would normally have a significant effect on the environment if the project would:

AE-1 Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

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- AE-2 Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.
- AE-3 Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
- AE-4 Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

The Initial Study, included as Appendix A, substantiates that impacts associated with the following thresholds would be less than significant:

- Threshold AE-1
- Threshold AE-2

These impacts will not be addressed in the following analysis.

5.1.3 Environmental Impacts

The Project Site consists of two areas along Long Beach Boulevard totaling 373 acres, stretching from Anaheim Street on the south to Wardlow Road on the north (see Figures 2, *Local Vicinity*, and 3, *Aerial Photograph*): 1) the Midtown Specific Plan area spanning approximately 369 acres from Anaheim Street on the south to Wardlow Road on the north and 2) an area outside of, but adjacent to the Midtown Specific Plan boundary, which consist of approximately 4 acres around Officer Black Park (west of Pasadena Avenue between 21st Street and 20th Street). Both of these areas make up the overall Project Site and constitute the Proposed Project. As shown in Table 3-3, *Overall Land Use Projections for Proposed Project*, the Proposed Project would accommodate approximately 1,700 dwelling units, 369,000 square feet of commercial and employment-generating uses, 27 hospital beds, and 81 hotel rooms over existing conditions. No physical change (e.g., additional development intensity, redevelopment) is expected to occur within the area outside the Midtown Specific Plan and all existing uses within this area are expected to remain.

The Proposed Project also includes closure of the following roadway segments, which intersect with Long Beach Boulevard, to vehicular traffic in order to create parklets (small street parks; see Figure 5.12-1, *Parks and Recreational Facilities Serving the Project Site*): 25th Street west of Long Beach Boulevard; 25th Street east of Long Beach Boulevard; 23rd Street west of Long Beach Boulevard; 23rd Street east of Long Beach Boulevard; 21st Street west of Long Beach Boulevard; 21st Street east of Long Beach Boulevard; Rhea Street east of Long Beach Boulevard; Esther Street east of Long Beach Boulevard; 15th Street west of Long Beach Boulevard; 15th Street east of Long Beach Boulevard; and 14th Street east of Long Beach Boulevard.

The following impact analysis addresses thresholds of significance for which the Initial Study disclosed potentially significant impacts. The applicable thresholds are identified in brackets after the impact statement.

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Impact 5.1-1: Future development that would be accommodated by the Proposed Project would alter but not substantially degrade the visual character of the Project Site and its surroundings. [Threshold AE-3]

Impact Analysis: Following is a discussion of the project-related impacts that could occur within each of the areas of the Project Site: 1) the Midtown Specific Plan area spanning approximately 369 acres from Anaheim Street on the south to Wardlow Road on the north and 2) an area outside of, but adjacent to the Midtown Specific Plan boundary, which consist of approximately 4 acres around Officer Black Park (west of Pasadena Avenue between 21st Street and 20th Street).

The assessment of aesthetic impacts is subjective by nature. Aesthetics generally refers to the identification of visual resources and their quality, as well as an overall visual perception of the environment. A project is generally considered to have a significant aesthetic impact if it substantially changes the character of the project site such that the site becomes visually incompatible or visually unexpected with its surroundings.

The potential aesthetic and visual character impacts resulting from the Proposed Project within each of the areas of the Project Site are addressed below.

Midtown Specific Plan Area

Implementation of the Midtown Specific Plan would allow for approximately 1,700 dwelling units, 369,000 square feet of commercial and employment generating uses, 27 hospital beds, and 81 hotel rooms over existing conditions (see Table 3-1, *Land Use Projections for Midtown Specific Plan Area*). Development within Midtown Specific Plan area would be undertaken by a number of landowners over time, within the framework established by the Midtown Specific Plan.

The visual character of the Midtown Specific Plan area anticipated under the Midtown Specific Plan would vary based on development that would occur in each of the four proposed districts:

- The **Transit Node District** would be characterized by intense building types, including mid- and low-rise podium, mixed-use flex blocks, liners, stacked flats and live-work units. Dependent on individual parcel depth, the minimum and maximum building heights would be three and seven stories, respectively. The buildings would offer retail, restaurant, entertainment, and other pedestrian-oriented uses at the street level, with offices and flats above in mixed-use buildings.

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- The **Corridor District** applies to areas between the Metro Blue Line stations. Therefore, the district is planned for housing and neighborhood-serving uses within walking distance of a Transit Node District. Building types include lined block, stacked flats, courtyard housing, live-work units, rowhouses, and tuck-under units. Multifamily units would also be allowed in two- to four-story buildings. The maximum building height would be between three and five stories depending on the depth of each parcel.
- The **Medical District** would be a comprehensive health campus based on the Long Beach Memorial Medical Center's master planning efforts. The district would have the widest range of building types and multiple parking structures at varying intensity with a maximum building height of seven stories. Emphasis would be placed on enhancing connectivity between the medical center to the business corridor.
- The **Open Space District** would preserve existing community and mini parks, including Veteran Memorial Park, Fellowship Park, Officer Daryle Black Memorial Park, and Fourteenth Street Park. In addition, parklets (small street parks) are proposed along Long Beach Boulevard to provide active and passive park spaces within the urban environment.

The existing character of the Midtown Specific Plan area includes one- to two-story buildings associated with commercial and retail uses, auto-oriented services, motels, and residential uses (single-family and apartments), as well as a few four-story high-density residential developments, would transition into an area with more high-density residential, commercial, employment, and mixed-use land uses. Greater allowable building heights, building intensity, and allowance of mixed uses in accordance with the uses envisioned and permitted for the aforementioned districts would result in a change to the visual character of the Midtown Specific Plan area, but it would not result in a degradation of visual character or quality.

The Midtown Specific Plan would create a vibrant, multimodal neighborhood for residents, with improved access to services, retail, entertainment, and alternative transportation. The proposed development and design improvements would enhance mobility and complete streets to heighten the pedestrian experience for walkers, shoppers, workers, bicyclists, and users of transit. Planned residential, commercial, and mixed-use buildings would form a consistent matrix of urban fabric that is punctuated by parklets (small street parks). The parklets would not only provide for much needed open space for communities along Long Beach Boulevard, but would also help provide visual relief in this highly urbanized area of the City.

Areas surrounding the existing Metro Blue Line stations in the Transit Node District would experience the greatest amount of transition to take advantage of the transit opportunities and become compatible with the evolving built environment. Concentrating development intensity near the Metro Blue Line stations would help revitalize the commercial-corridor character of Long Beach Boulevard and reinvigorate business investment in the community while also improving the visual quality of the Midtown Specific Plan area by developing new and renovated buildings with a high level of architectural design and quality. In addition, transit-oriented development would enhance safety and mobility to help create complete streets for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.

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The Midtown Specific Plan provides design guidelines designed to ensure that the future development projects are visually compatible with surrounding land uses, and establishes detailed development standards that address land use compatibility. The Midtown Specific Plan would ensure high quality and context-sensitive design within the Midtown Specific Plan area through implementation of the design guidelines and development standards. Compliance with the design guideline and development standards would be ensured through the City's development review and building plan check process.

Specifically, future development within the Midtown Specific Plan area would be required to comply with design guidelines of the Midtown Specific Plan, which establish parameters for building design and massing, facades and street walls, open space, circulation and parking, landscaping, signage, public art, and utility areas. These design guidelines would help create a uniform architectural theme for the Midtown Specific Plan area, which currently has no consistent architectural theme, as well as a unique character for each of the four districts of the Midtown Specific Plan (Corridor, Medical, Transit Node, and Open Space Districts). For example, new development within the Transit Node District would be designed with a pedestrian emphasis and architectural aesthetic to encourage active transportation to the various retail, service, and entertainment uses in the district, and development within the Medical District would be designed to improve accessibility and connectivity between the many buildings on the medical campus.

In addition, compliance with the development standards of the Midtown Specific Plan related to permitted uses, development intensity, building placement (i.e., setbacks and fronting), building heights, and parking requirements would ensure that all new development projects that would be accommodated by the Midtown Specific Plan are built to share similar character and style to unify the entire Midtown Specific Plan area. For example, minimum and maximum setbacks and building heights have been established in the Midtown Specific Plan to create a consistent street scene, provide attractive landscaping, and provide a buffer for pedestrians from street activity.

Overall, the Midtown Specific Plan would include landscaping and architectural treatments that would bring consistency and stylistic improvements to the existing visual character of the Midtown Specific Plan area. Although development in accordance with the Midtown Specific Plan would visually alter the area, it would not deteriorate the existing visual character or conflict with any existing architectural characteristics specific to the area. Therefore, impacts related to aesthetic and visual character are not anticipated to be significant.

Area Outside the Midtown Specific Plan

Under the Proposed Project, the area that is outside the Midtown Specific Plan, which covers two residential blocks around Officer Black Park (approximately 4 acres) west of Pasadena Avenue between 21st Street and 20th Street (see Figure 3-5, *Current and Proposed Zoning Designations*), would be extracted from PD 29 and retain its underlying conventional zoning designations, which include Single-Family Residential, standard lot (R-1-N); Three-Family Residential (R-3-S); and Park (P). With the exception of the zoning designation revisions that would be undertaken, no physical change (e.g., additional development intensity, redevelopment) is expected to occur within this area and all existing uses (which include residential uses, a church, and Officer Black Park) are expected to remain. Therefore, no aesthetic and visual character impacts are anticipated to occur.

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Impact 5.1-2: Future development that would be accommodated by the Proposed Project would generate additional light and glare within the Project Site and its surroundings, which could adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. [Threshold AE-4]

Impact Analysis: Nighttime illumination and glare impacts are the effects of a project's exterior lighting upon adjacent uses and areas. Glare can also be generated by light reflecting off passing cars and large expanses of glazing (i.e., glass windows) or other reflective surfaces. Excessive light and/or glare can impair vision, cause annoyance, affect sleep patterns, and generate safety hazards when experienced by drivers. Light and glare impacts are determined through a comparison of the existing light and glare sources with the proposed lighting plan or policies and the type of development proposed.

Given that the Project Site is highly urbanized and built out, the site contains many existing sources of nighttime illumination. These include street and parking area lights, security lighting, and exterior lighting on existing residential, commercial, and medical buildings. Additional onsite nighttime light and glare is caused by surrounding residential and commercial land uses, as well as from vehicular traffic and light fixtures along I-405 and from the Metro Blue Line light-rail trains. The existing commercial, medical, and office land uses throughout the Project Site are not considered sensitive land uses with regards to nighttime lighting and glare. However, there are a few sensitive land uses within the Project Site, which include single-family residences, apartments, and high-density residential developments. Additionally, many of the areas surrounding the Project Site include single- and multifamily residences.

The potential light and glared impacts resulting from the Proposed Project within each of the areas of the Project Site are addressed below.

Midtown Specific Plan Area

The Proposed Project would alter and intensify land uses and their related lighting sources throughout the throughout the Midtown Specific Plan area by introducing new building (interior and exterior), open space, security, sign, and parking lights. In addition to necessary lighting for safety and security, the Proposed Project would also introduce aesthetic lighting, such as illumination of areas within the Medical and Transit Node Districts for architectural and façade detailing. Additional sources of glare could also be introduced through the Project Site in the form of large expanses of glazing (i.e., glass windows) and building materials (i.e., reflective metal treatments).

Following is a discussion of the potential day and nighttime light and glare impacts that would occur within the Midtown Specific Plan area and its surroundings as a result of development that would be accommodated under the Midtown Specific Plan.

Architectural Treatments and Building Materials

Because the Midtown Specific Plan allows higher intensity development throughout the Midtown Specific Plan area, its implementation would likely result in larger buildings with more exterior glazing (e.g., windows and doors) and building materials (i.e., reflective metal treatments) that could result in new sources of day or nighttime glare.

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The architectural treatments of future development projects that would be accommodated under the Midtown Specific Plan would include style-appropriate architectural building materials, such as stucco walls and accent stucco, painted metal finishing, vinyl windows, and precision-cut CMU-block veneer. These building materials and architectural treatments are not reflective in nature and would therefore not create substantial day or nighttime glare. They would be similar to building materials used on existing land uses throughout the Midtown Specific Plan area.

Windows that would be installed in residential and nonresidential development projects could potentially increase sources of glare, because they would reflect sunlight during certain times of the day. In addition, vehicles parked on future development sites would increase the potential for reflected sunlight during certain times of the day. However, glare from these sources is typical of the surrounding area and would not increase beyond what is expected for a highly urbanized area. Additionally, the Midtown Specific Plan includes design guidelines (Chapter 5 of the Midtown Specific Plan) that prohibit the use of highly reflective or very dark glass.

Therefore, daytime glare impacts from project-related architectural treatments and building materials are not anticipated to be significant.

Nighttime Lighting

Despite new and expanded sources of nighttime illumination and glare, development that would be accommodated by the Midtown Specific Plan is not expected to generate a substantial increase in light and glare in a manner that would result in a significant impact. The Midtown Specific Plan includes design guidelines that help reduce the impacts of light and glare on adjacent uses. Specifically, the following design guidelines (Chapter 5 of the Midtown Specific Plan) would help reduce light and glare impacts of new development projects that would be accommodated by the Midtown Specific Plan:

- Direct lamp glare from unshielded floodlights is not permitted.
- Lighting that aims light directly into the night sky is prohibited.
- Warm white light is encouraged. Blinking, flashing, and oscillating lights are prohibited. Colored lights are not encouraged unless they contribute to the theming of commercial areas or establishments. Overly bright or glaring lights should be avoided.
- Exterior lighting should be designed and located to not project off-site or onto adjacent uses. This is especially critical with neighboring residential uses.
- Signs should be externally illuminated by ambient lighting, lights attached to the facade, or exposed neon on the top. External illumination should use focused, low-intensity equipment.
- Channel letters which are individually illuminated are desirable whereas internally illuminated plastic cabinets are discouraged.

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- Signs illuminated by downward directed, wall mounted lights with fully-shielded lamps are encouraged.
- Lighting should be scaled for pedestrians and of a style consistent with the surrounding architectural theme.
- Parking lots should be screened from adjacent street views but should not be hidden from the view of passersby and police. Headlight walls used to screen parking should provide breaks to allow pedestrian circulation. The walls should be low enough for safety and security purposes.
- Parking area lighting should be designed using many small-scaled lights versus using fewer excessively tall lights.

Additionally, future development projects would be required to adhere to the lighting standards outlined in the City's Municipal Code, thereby ensuring that existing and future project residents throughout the Project Site and its surroundings are protected from project-related, as well as existing, lighting sources. For example, Section's 21.41.259 (Parking Areas – Lighting), 21.44.855 (Light and Glare Intrusion Prevention), and 21.44.600 (Prohibited Signs) of the City's Municipal Code require that all parking area lighting be illuminated with lights directed and shielded to prevent light spillover to adjacent properties, that any electronic signs be adequately shielded and properly oriented and aimed, and all floodlights be hooded or shielded to minimize light and glare on public right-of-way, adjacent property, or other sensitive land uses (e.g., homes, schools, churches, etc.), respectively. Compliance with the applicable lighting provisions of the City's Municipal Code would be ensured through the City's development review and building plan check process.

Furthermore, future development projects under the Proposed Project would be required to comply with California's Building Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings, Title 24, Part 6, of the California Code of Regulations, which outlines mandatory provisions for lighting control devices and luminaires. For example, the Proposed Project's lighting sources would be required to be installed in accordance with the provisions of Section 110.9 (Mandatory Requirements for Lighting Control Devices and Systems, Ballasts, and Luminaires) of the California Building Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings. Compliance with these state provisions would be ensured through the City's development review process and building plan check process.

Finally, the Proposed Project's lighting sources would be similar to those of the surrounding residential and nonresidential land uses. Considering existing sources of lighting through the Project Site and its surroundings, the amount and intensity of nighttime lighting that would occur throughout the Project Site would not be substantially greater or different than existing lighting in the area.

With adherence of the provisions of the Midtown Specific Plan, City's Municipal Code and California's Building Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings, and because the Project Site and surrounding area are largely developed and contain existing sources of lighting, the lighting and glare associated with development that would be accommodated by the Midtown Specific Plan would not substantially increase nighttime light and glare throughout the Midtown Specific Plan area or its surroundings. Therefore, project-related light and glare impacts are not anticipated to be significant.

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Area Outside the Midtown Specific Plan

As noted above, with the exception of the zoning designation revisions that would be undertaken in this area of the Project Site under the Proposed Project, no physical change (e.g., additional development intensity, redevelopment) is expected to occur within this area and all existing uses are expected to remain. Therefore, no light and glare impacts are anticipated to occur.

5.1.4 Cumulative Impacts

Aesthetic impacts are localized to the Project Site and its immediate surroundings. Given that the Project Site is highly urbanized and almost entirely built out, implementation of the Proposed Project and any other future cumulative development that would be accommodated under the City's General Plan would likely not negatively impact the visual character of the Project Site or its surroundings. As with development that would be accommodated by the Proposed Project, all future cumulative development projects under the City's General Plan would also be required to adhere to development standards outlined in the City's Municipal Code as they relate to aesthetics. Therefore, the Proposed Project's contribution to cumulative visual character and quality impacts are considered less than significant.

In addition, due to the existence of light and glare from existing commercial and residential uses along Long Beach Boulevard and surrounding properties, the Proposed Project is not anticipated to add significant new sources of nighttime light and glare in the project vicinity. Any new residential or nonresidential development near the Project Site would add new lighting sources but would be primarily surrounded by other existing commercial and residential uses with similar lighting sources. Further, the City's Municipal Code details several lighting requirements as they relate to parking areas, light and glare instruction, and prohibited signs (Sections 21.41.259, 21.44.855, and 21.44.600), which would be applicable to future cumulative development projects. Therefore, light and glare impacts of future cumulative development projects would not combine with those of the Proposed Project to adversely impact existing or planned sensitive receptors such as single-family homes. The Proposed Project's contribution to cumulative light and glare impacts are considered less than significant.

5.1.5 Existing Regulations

- California's Building Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings, Title 24, Part 6, of the California Code of Regulations

- City of Long Beach Municipal Code:
 - Section 21.41.259, Parking Areas – Lighting
 - Section 21.44.855, Light and Glare Intrusion Prevention
 - Section 21.44.600, Prohibited Signs

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5.1.6 Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Upon implementation of regulatory requirements, the following impacts would be less than significant: 5.1-1 and 5.1-2.

5.1.7 Mitigation Measures

No potentially significant impacts have been identified and no mitigation measures are required.

5.1.8 Level of Significance After Mitigation

No mitigation measures have been identified and impacts are less than significant.

5.1.9 References

No references were used in this section.

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