

## 4.1 AESTHETICS

This section provides a discussion of the existing visual and aesthetic resources on the Project site and in the surrounding area, as well as an analysis of potential impacts from implementation of the Belmont Pool Revitalization Project (proposed Project). The term “Project area” is used to refer to the Project site (including construction staging areas) and the immediately adjacent land uses. In February 2015, the former Belmont Pool was demolished due to substandard seismic and structural conditions deemed to be an imminent threat to public safety. In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15125(a), the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as it exists at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) was published, will normally constitute the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether an impact is significant. Because the NOP for the proposed Project was issued on April 9, 2014, before the demolition of the Belmont Pool structure, the analysis of potential aesthetics impacts includes the former Belmont Pool as a part of the baseline aesthetic condition.

### Scoping Process

The City of Long Beach (City) distributed the first NOP for this Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) from April 18 to May 17, 2013. The City received three comment letters in response to the original NOP. No comment letter associated with Aesthetics was received in response to the original NOP circulated for the proposed Project. Due to revisions in the Project Description, the City re-issued and circulated the NOP for the Draft EIR between April 9, 2014, and May 8, 2014. The City received five comment letters in response to the re-issued NOP during the public review period. No Aesthetics-related issues were raised in those comment letters.

#### 4.1.1 Methodology

The concepts and terminology that are used in this analysis are described below.

- **Aesthetic Resource:** An aesthetic resource is any element, or group of elements, that embodies a sense of beauty. A city's aesthetic resources include its natural setting, the architectural quality of its buildings, the vitality of its landscaping, the spatial relationships they create, and the views afforded by each. The degree to which these resources are present in a community is clearly subject to personal and cultural interpretation. However, it is possible to qualify certain resources as having aesthetic characteristics and establish general guidelines for assessing the aesthetic impacts of new development.
- **Glare:** A continuous or periodic intense light that may cause eye discomfort or be blinding to humans.
- **Light Source:** A device that produces illumination, including incandescent bulbs, fluorescent and neon tubes, halogen and other vapor lamps, and reflecting surfaces or refractors incorporated into a lighting fixture. Any translucent enclosure of a light source is considered to be part of the light source.
- **Scenic Resource:** An element that contributes to the area's scenic value and includes landform, vegetation, water, or adjacent scenery and may include a cultural modification to the natural environment.

- **Scenic Vista:** A scenic vista is the view of an area that is visually or aesthetically pleasing from a certain vantage point. It is usually viewed from some distance away. Aesthetic components of a scenic vista include (1) scenic quality, (2) sensitivity level, and (3) view access. A scenic vista can be impacted in two ways. A development project can have visual impacts by either directly diminishing the scenic quality of the vista or by blocking the view corridors or “vista” of the scenic resource. Important factors in determining whether a proposed project will block views include its height, mass, and location relative to surrounding land uses and travel corridors.
- **Vantage Point:** A particular point of observation.
- **Viewer Sensitivity:** Viewer sensitivity is defined by visibility of resources in the landscape; proximity of viewers to the visual resources; elevation of viewers relative to the visual resource; frequency and duration of views; number of views; and types and expectations of individuals and viewer groups.
- **Viewshed:** The surface area that is visible from a given vantage point or series of vantage points. It is also the area from which that vantage point or series of vantage points may be seen. The viewshed aids in identifying the views that could be affected by the proposed action.
- **Visual Character and Quality:** The visual aesthetic character or quality of a streetscape, building, group of buildings, or other human-made or natural feature that create an overall impression of an area within an urban context. As examples, a scenic vista along the boundary of a community, a pleasing streetscape with trees, and well-kept residences and yards are scenic resources that create a pleasing impression of an area. In general, concepts of visual character and quality can be organized around four basic elements: (1) site utilization, (2) buildings and structures, (3) landscaping, and (4) signage.

This section assesses the aesthetic compatibility of the proposed Project with the surrounding area and potential impacts to any public views that may exist in the Project vicinity. The assessment of aesthetic impacts is subjective by nature. This analysis attempts to identify and objectively examine factors that contribute to the perception of aesthetic impacts. Potential aesthetic impacts of the proposed Project can be evaluated by considering such factors as the scale, mass, proportion, orientation, landscaping, setbacks, and construction materials associated with the design of the proposed Project. The City has not adopted defined standards or methodologies for the assessment of aesthetic impacts. Edge conditions and viewshed alterations are considered in the context of these factors to the extent such information is known. The aesthetic compatibility of the proposed Project with the surrounding area and potential impacts to sensitive viewers are examined.

Sensitive viewers are generally those associated with designated vantage points and public recreational uses. Views evaluated from private property are not considered to be protected views under the General Plan polices or Zoning Ordinance. Neither State nor local law protects private views from private lands and the rights of one landowner cannot prevail over the rights of another landowner, except in accordance with uniformly applied standards and policies as expressed in the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

Potential impacts of the proposed Project on area viewsheds are analyzed by judging Project impacts to three viewing distance zones, as explained below.

- **Foreground Views.** These views include elements that are seen at a close distance and that dominate the entire view. These vantage points are generally 500 ft or less from the Project site, depending on the scale of the Project, surrounding topography, and other prominent physical features in the Project vicinity.
- **Middleground Views.** These views include elements that are seen at a moderate distance and that partially dominate the view. These vantage points are generally located between 500 ft and 1 mile from the Project site.
- **Background Views.** These views include elements that are seen at a long distance and typically comprise horizon-line views that are part of the overall visual composition of the area. These vantage points are generally farther than 1 mile from the Project site.

**Light and Glare.** The analysis of light and glare identifies the location of light-sensitive land uses and describes the existing ambient conditions on the Project site and in the Project site vicinity. The analysis describes the proposed Project's light and glare sources and the extent to which Project lighting, including any potential illuminated signage, would spill off the Project site onto adjacent light-sensitive areas. The analysis also describes the affected street frontages, the direction in which the light would be focused, and the extent to which the proposed Project would illuminate sensitive land uses. The analysis also considers the potential for sunlight to reflect off of building surfaces (glare) and the extent to which such glare would interfere with the operation of motor vehicles, aviation, or other activities. Glare can also be produced during evening and night-time hours by artificial light sources, such as illuminated signage and vehicle headlights. Glare-sensitive uses generally include residences and transportation corridors (i.e., roadways).

#### 4.1.2 Existing Environmental Setting

**Regional Visual Character.** The proposed Project site is located in the City of Long Beach, between the Los Angeles River and the San Gabriel River. The site lies within the southwestern area of the Los Angeles Basin, which consists of a low alluvial floodplain. The floodplain is punctuated by a line of elongated low hills, folds, and faults that delineate the northwest-trending Newport-Inglewood Structural Zone. Floodplain deposits from the Los Angeles River and the San Gabriel River have contributed to the formation of the coastal plain on which the site is located.

**Existing Visual Character of Surrounding Areas.** The areas surrounding the Project site are developed urban areas including residential, commercial, and recreational land uses. Distinct visual components in the surrounding areas are discussed below.

**Beach.** The City beach borders the southern edge of the Project site. The beach spans the area between the edge of the former Belmont Pool site to the edge of the high tide line (approximately 100 yards). It should be noted that a temporary, shallow backfilled sand area ("sand blanket") was placed where the previous building was located, at the request of the California Coastal Commission. This backfilled sand area is temporary and is the location where the proposed Belmont Pool facility will be constructed. No vegetation exists on the beach with the exception of a several palm trees. A multimodal pedestrian and bike trail traverses the beach generally east-

west and can be accessed from both the west and east parking lots. Beach volleyball courts are available for recreational users. A dog-accessible beach (Rosie's Dog Beach) is located southeast of the Project area. The visual character of the beach is dominated by expansive views of the ocean to the south that stretch from the foreground to the horizon, the meandering multimodal beach path, lifeguard towers regularly interspersed along the beach to the east and west, views of the Belmont Veteran's Memorial Pier to the west, surface parking and the Belmont pool complex to the north, and a City maintenance yard to the east. Distant views from the beach include the waters of the Pacific Ocean, manmade islands approximately 0.75 to 1.25 miles from the shoreline, the marine-related commercial development of the Port of Long Beach, and other general urban development to the northeast and northwest. General urban development directly to the north of the beach (at Belmont Plaza) was obscured by the former Belmont Pool.

**Belmont Veteran's Memorial Pier.** The Pier is located west of the Project site. The pier is a public City resource for recreational visitors. Dominant uses include fishing and sightseeing. The visual character of the Pier is dominated by expansive views of the ocean. Distant views from the pier include the Project site, beach areas, the City maintenance yard, parking lots, marine-related commercial development associated with the far distant Port of Long Beach, and residential and commercial urban development.

**Residential and Commercial.** Residential uses are located to the north and northeast of the Project site across Ocean Boulevard and consist of mostly two and three story medium density multi-family structures that vary in architectural styles and colors. Views from this residential portion of this neighborhood consist mostly of the street scene along Ocean Boulevard which includes mature landscaping such as palm and canopy trees, street light poles, and overhead utilities. An approximately six ft concrete wall lines the western side of Ocean Boulevard, impairing much of the public view of the Pacific Ocean from this area.

Immediately west of the Project site are the Surf Terrace Apartments and the Belmont Shore Condominiums which are 3- and 4-story medium-density residential buildings. These structures are solid buildings that do not contain much architectural variability that allow for views of the shoreline or Ocean from the surrounding area. The size and mass of these residential buildings make them one of the most dominant visual features of the urban setting of the Project area.

Commercial uses are located immediately north and northwest of the Project site across Termino Avenue and Ocean Boulevard. They consist of mostly one-story structures that are unique and eclectic in architectural styles with a variety of facade shapes, building colors, and signage. Views from the commercial uses are limited to the street scene of Ocean Boulevard and the accompanying landscaping and infrastructure.

**Outdoor Temporary Pool.** In order to provide aquatic services during the closure of the former Belmont pool, the City installed a temporary pool east of the Project site in the western portion of the Beach Parking Lot (refer to Figure 3.2, in Chapter 3.0, Project Description). The temporary pool opened on December 19, 2013, and is expected to remain open until the proposed Project begins operations. An 8 ft tall perimeter fence containing a photographic mural depicting people

swimming surrounds the temporary pool. Behind the fence, the pool is raised approximately 4 ft above ground, making the lifeguard towers, sun shades, and visitors walking on the pool deck visible from outside the pool. Four 10 ft light poles are located at the corners of the temporary pool to allow nighttime aquatic activities. Views from the temporary pool include the surrounding parking lot, the Project site residential and commercial uses, as well as the beach and Pacific Ocean.

**Light and Glare.** Existing nighttime lighting conditions vary substantially throughout the City of Long Beach. Nighttime lighting varies from moderately high levels in areas of commercial development to areas of low level or a complete absence of night lighting. The difference observed result from both variation in levels of development and the light dampening effects of topographical changes in terrain. The majority of light and glare near the Project site comes from illuminated outdoor commercial signage, residential lighting, traffic signals, passing vehicles and streetlights in the immediate area.

**Existing Visual Character of the Project Site.** The former Belmont Pool was existing at the time the NOP was published and, therefore, is included as a part of the baseline existing conditions. The Project site is relatively flat with existing grades ranging from 0.5 to 4.0 ft above mean sea level (amsl). The site is fully developed and includes a passive park on the northern half and the (former) Belmont Pool on the southern portion.

**Pool Complex.** The Belmont Pool consisted of an Olympic-size indoor pool, a community/private event building, springboard and platform diving well, weight room, and men's and women's locker rooms/restroom facilities; La Palapa restaurant located in the same building as the existing pool; and an adjacent outdoor swimming pool separated from the larger indoor facility by a multimodal beach path (boardwalk).

The indoor Belmont Pool building measured 224 by 148 ft and was constructed in 1967 in a distinctive architectural style with a shear-wall frame, cast in place reinforced concrete columns, and prestressed concrete girders. It had a 23 ft high glass curtain wall below a 25 ft high precast concrete shear-wall. The two-story pool was flanked by a one-story locker room on the east and a two-story community building that was rented for private events (such as weddings and conferences) on the west side. The facades of the complex were built with a series of vertical concrete piers that support flat roofs with projecting eaves and pebble aggregate panels in between them. The effect was a contrasting smooth and rough texture that suggested classical arches below the roof line. In 1969, the building won an award from the Portland Cement Association for its versatile use of concrete in "structural, architectural, and economic solutions" (Long Beach Heritage 2013).

The existing outdoor pools are currently open to the public and are situated on the east side of the pool complex. The Outdoor Lap Pool is a 6-lane, 25-yard heated pool with a water temperature of 80 degrees. The pool is 3.5 ft deep throughout. There is also a wading pool for toddlers and young children. Plexiglas walls are constructed around three sides of the facility with views of the ocean to the south.

Existing lighting on the Project site includes two street lights along East Olympic Plaza and 18 lamppost lights dispersed throughout the site to illuminate walkways. Additionally, light poles illuminate the outdoor pools. Seven lamppost lights adjacent to the former Belmont Pool building were removed as a part of the emergency demolition of that structure.

The visual character of the Project site is dominated by views of the beach and Pacific Ocean, surface parking, a City maintenance yard, and businesses. The Belmont Veteran's Memorial Pier is visible to the west of the pool complex, as well as distant views of the Port of Long Beach and manmade islands several hundred yards from the shoreline. Views of residential and other general urban development to the north are also visible from the Project site.

**Passive Park.** The passive park is a recreational area located on the northern side of the Project site and consists of grassy lawns, mature ornamental trees, a multi-modal pedestrian and bicycle trail, street lamps, and bicycle racks. The visual character of the park was dominated by views of the former Belmont Pool, parking lots (Beach Parking Lot and Pier Parking Lot), East Olympic Plaza and street parking, and adjacent commercial establishments. Distant views from the park include limited views of the Pacific Ocean to the west, and general urban development to the northeast and northwest.

**Vantage Point Descriptions.** The following discussion describes several key views of the Project site from adjacent public roads and sidewalks. Photographs were taken to analyze the various views that existed during the baseline setting and that would potentially be affected by the proposed Project. A photograph location key map (see Figure 4.1.1, Key View Locations Map) indicates the vantage point from which each key view photograph was taken and the representative view from that location.

Figures 4.1.2 and 4.1.3, Key Views 1 and 2, and Key Views 3 and 4, respectively, contain four key view photographs, as referenced in the following discussion, and are provided following the description of each vantage point.

- **Key View 1: View from Southbound Termino Ave (Figure 4.1.2):** Key View 1 shows a view of the proposed Project site looking south at the intersection of Termino Avenue and Midway Street at the corner of the Jack in the Box parking lot. This vantage point was selected because it represents the view of the Project site for both vehicular and pedestrian visitors to the Pier and beach. This vantage point was also selected because it is the secondary access point to the proposed Project site.

As shown, the foreground consists of mature landscaping and the Belmont Shore Children's Center. The middleground contains the former Belmont Pool located on the Project site as well as the entrance to the Pier Parking lot with associated landscaping. The background is a small and mostly unnoticeable portion of this view but contains the Pacific Ocean and horizon in the distant background.

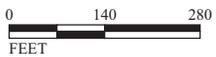


FIGURE 4.1.1

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-  - Project Site
-  - Key View Location



SOURCE: Google Earth

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*Belmont Pool Revitalization Project*  
Key View Locations Map

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**Key View 1:** View of the Project site facing south at the intersection of Termino Avenue and Midway Street.



**Key View 2:** View of the Project site facing southwest from the intersection of Ocean Boulevard and Bennett Avenue.

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FIGURE 4.1.2

*Belmont Pool Revitalization Project*

**Key Views 1 & 2**

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**Key View 3:** View of the Project site traveling west on Ocean Boulevard at the intersection with Prospect Avenue.



**Key View 4:** View of the Project site from the midway point on the Pier facing northeast.

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FIGURE 4.1.3

*Belmont Pool Revitalization Project*  
Key Views 3 & 4

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- **Key View 2: View from Westbound Ocean Boulevard at Bennett Avenue (Figure 4.1.2):** Key View 2 shows a view of the Project site facing southwest from the intersection of Ocean Boulevard and Bennett Avenue. This vantage point was selected because it depicts the most direct and accessible view of the Project site from the surrounding area. Additionally, it depicts the point along Ocean Boulevard where there a break in the concrete wall and mature landscaping occurs, allowing westbound vehicular travelers a clear view of the Project site. This vantage point was also selected because it is the primary access point to the Project site.

The foreground views are of the intersection and associated street lights of Ocean Boulevard and Bennett Avenue. The middleground, and most prominent feature of this view, is of the passive park landscaping and eastern part of the former Belmont Pool building. The background is mostly blocked by the onsite structures and landscaping with the exception of a small portion of the sky visible to the left of the Belmont Pool complex.

- **Key View 3: View from Westbound Ocean Boulevard at Prospect Avenue (Figure 4.1.3):** Key View 3 shows a view of the Project site traveling west on Ocean Boulevard at the intersection with Prospect Avenue, approximately 450 ft from the eastern boundary of the Project site. This vantage point was selected because it represents the most typical view of the Project site for drivers traveling west along Ocean Boulevard and includes the mature landscaping and concrete wall located adjacent to Ocean Boulevard.

Directly in front of this view are Ocean Boulevard, the median landscaping and associated lights and signage. The middleground includes the concrete wall and mature landscaping adjacent to Ocean Boulevard only portions of the temporary pool and Belmont Pool in the background view are visible since they are mostly blocked by the concrete wall and street landscaping.

- **Key View 4: View from Belmont Memorial Veteran's Pier (Figure 4.1.3):** Key View 4 shows a view of the Project site facing northeast from the midway point on the Pier. This vantage point was selected because it represents the view of the Project site for visitors of the Pier and best depicts the coastline side of the Project site. The Belmont Pool structure is the most visible from this area as there are very few trees or other landscaping to block views of from the complex. This vantage point was also selected because it represents the viewpoint of ocean-related visitors to the area as well as any boating viewers.

The foreground view includes the Pacific Ocean with middleground views consisting of the beach and southerly side of the former Belmont Pool structure. Other structures in the middleground include the Surf Terrace Apartments to the left and temporary pool to the right of the Belmont Pool. Background views include the skyline of the inland topography of Long Beach.

### 4.1.3 Regulatory Setting

**Federal Policies and Regulations.** No federal policies or regulations pertaining to aesthetics are applicable to the proposed Project.

**State Policies and Regulations.**

**California Scenic Highways Program.** California's Scenic Highway Program was designed to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors. Jurisdictions nominating a scenic highway for

official designation have in place or adopt ordinances to preserve the scenic quality of the corridor, including policies to preserve scenic resources through land use regulations, site planning, control of outdoor advertising, grading, and measures to direct structural design and appearance (California Streets and Highways Code 260 et seq.). There are no Officially Designated or Eligible State Scenic Highways as designated by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans),<sup>1</sup> in the vicinity of the proposed Project.

**California Coastal Act.** The policies included in the California Coastal Act ([Coastal Act] Sections 30200 et al.), Article 3, are intended to protect certain water-oriented activities, recreational boating uses, marine-related recreational facilities, and development of the ocean front land. The activities covered in Article 3 also include dredging and movement of sediments and nutrients from the ocean floor. An applicable Coastal Act visual/aesthetic policy is listed below.

Section 30251:

*The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coast areas, to minimize the alteration of natural landforms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.*

Section 30253:

*New development shall: “(e) Where appropriate, protect special communities and neighborhoods that, because of their unique characteristics, are popular visitor destination points for recreational uses.” The California Coastal Commission has defined special communities as “areas that add to the visual attractiveness of the coast.”*

### **Local Regulations and Policies**

**City of Long Beach General Plan.** The City of Long Beach General Plan includes a total of 11 elements, including Open Space, Housing, Air Quality, Transportation, Land Use, Seismic Safety, Local Coastal Program, Noise, Public Safety, Scenic Routes, and Conservation. The Long Beach General Plan includes the Land Use Element that addresses issues related to urban design and the overall aesthetic quality of the City. Specifically, the Land Use Element includes an Urban Design Analysis that outlines several features and policy directions for the urban character of the City, including the importance of building heights and masses, and also emphasizes visual compatibility, good design, and landscaping. The Land Use Element focuses on preservation of

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<sup>1</sup> California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). California Department of Transportation, California Scenic Highway Mapping System. Website: [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic\\_highways/](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/) (accessed March 9, 2015).

certain features such as the sandy beach frontages and bluffs and also includes provisions for “positive design steps” to improve appearances along many of the streets in Long Beach.

**Scenic Highway Element.** The Scenic Routes Element was adopted in 1975 in order to protect the valuable viewsheds throughout the City. The Scenic Routes Element identifies the portion of Ocean Boulevard that is adjacent to the Project site as being included in the “Recreational Scenic Route.” This route was created to “interconnect a kaleidoscope of recreational activities that are of the local and regional significance and portray an image of the City that is most desirable.” According to the Scenic Routes Element the Project site is adjacent to the “Shoreline” segment of the route, which offers some of the region’s best beaches. However, the route has not been officially designated as a State Scenic Route or Scenic Highway.

No goals or policies were established specifically for the Recreational Scenic Route. However, listed below are a list of goals and policies from the Scenic Routes Element that are generally related to the proposed Project:

- **GOAL:** Preserve and enhance natural and man-made aesthetic resources within and visible from scenic corridors.
  - **Policy 1:** Develop land use regulations and apply standards to control and enhance the quality of new and existing development within the scenic corridors of designated routes.
  - **Policy 2:** Remove or screen visual pollution from designated scenic route corridors.
  - **Policy 3:** Require the development and use of aesthetic design considerations in any necessary modification of roadways and appurtenances for the enhancement of all designated scenic routes.
- **GOAL:** Strengthen the City’s image, and thereby, the well-being of its citizens.
  - **Policy 1:** Increase the visibility of aesthetic features, natural and man-made, to develop a better awareness of the observer’s location within the City and a better understanding of the City’s function and meaning.
  - **Policy 2:** Develop standards of design articulation and continuity in sequential form and graphic representation that will unify and define the scenic route system.
  - **Policy 3:** Promote the awareness and use of the amenities of scenic routes for all segments of the population.
- **GOAL:** Link and enhance recreational, cultural, and educational opportunities through a network of scenic corridors.
  - **Policy 1:** Establish and maintain urban scenic routes to provide access to interesting and aesthetic natural and man-made features, historical and cultural sites, industrial and educational sites, and urban open space areas.
  - **Policy 2:** Cooperate in the establishment of an inter-urban, inter-county scenic route system.

- **Policy 3:** Maximize within the scenic corridors the compatible multi-purpose objectives of open space planning, such as recreation, conservation, public health and safety, and preservation of scenic-aesthetic amenity.

**City of Long Beach Planning Documents.** The City’s Open Space and Recreation Element of the General Plan and the Long Beach Department of Parks, Recreation, and Marine Strategic Plan contain objectives and policies related to aesthetics and visual character. The applicable objectives and policies are listed below.

**Open Space and Recreation Element–Policy 1.2:** Protect and improve the community’s natural resources, amenities, and scenic values, including nature centers, beaches, bluffs, wetlands, and water bodies.

**Open Space and Recreation Element–Policy 4.1:** Create additional recreation open space and pursue all appropriate available funding to enhance recreation opportunities.

**Marine Strategic Plan–Goal 4:** Ensure beaches, waterways, and marine amenities are accessible and provide a positive experience and image.

**Long Beach Municipal Code.** Title 21, Zoning, of the Long Beach Municipal Code (LBMC) includes property development standards, as well as design guidelines, for development projects within the City. Additionally, design guidelines and policies from the Belmont Pier Planned Development District (PD-2) and Municipal Code Chapter 21.35 – Park (P) Districts would be applicable to the Project site. Among the aspects of development regulated by the LBMC are types of allowable land uses, setback and height requirements, landscaping, walls, fencing, signage, access, parking requirements, storage areas, and trash enclosures. The LBMC also provides performance standards for various land use types to measure development projects’ consistency with such regulations.

**Belmont Pier Planned Development District (PD-2).** The intent of this Planned Development is to encourage a joint public and private effort to revitalize the underutilized area containing the significant public resources of the Belmont Pier and the Olympic Plaza Pool. The Planned Development District has been utilized in this effort because of its ability to combine flexibility of regulation while specifying detailed development requirements within a framework of maximum public review and involvement.

**Chapter 21.35 – Park (P) Districts.** The P District is established to set aside and preserve publicly owned natural and open areas for active and passive public use for recreational, cultural, and community service activities. Parks are established to promote the mental and physical health of the community and provide physical and psychological relief from the

intense urban development of the City. Such areas are characterized by landscaped open space, beaches, or inland bodies of water.

#### 4.1.4 Thresholds of Significance

According to Appendix G of the *State of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines*, the proposed Project may be considered to have a significant effect related to aesthetics if the Project would:

- Threshold 4.1.1: Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;**
- Threshold 4.1.2: Cause substantial damage to scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway;**
- Threshold 4.1.3: Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or**
- Threshold 4.1.4: Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.**

All of these thresholds were discussed in the Initial Study prepared for the proposed Project (Appendix A) and were recommended to be evaluated further within this Draft EIR, with the exception of Threshold 4.1.2, which evaluates scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway. There are no State Scenic Highways located within the City of Long Beach. Although Ocean Boulevard is a proposed Local Scenic Route, it has not been officially designated as a Scenic Route or Scenic Highway. Therefore, as determined in the Initial Study, there would be no impact associated with this threshold, and it will not be discussed further in this Draft EIR.

**CEQA Baseline.** At the time the NOP was published (April 2014), the Project site contained both the Belmont Pool facilities and the outdoor temporary pool (opened in December 2013 to provide swimming facilities while the permanent facility was under construction). Although the site contained the former Belmont Pool building at the time of the NOP, the facility was subsequently demolished in February 2015 to alleviate an imminent public safety threat due to the seismically unsafe condition of the building.

The inclusion of the former building in the assessment of aesthetic impacts is appropriate because the site has been dedicated as the Belmont Pool Plaza since 1962 when the use of Tideland funds for the construction of the “Belmont Plaza Beach Center” (now Belmont Plaza) project was approved by the voters after the Long Beach City Council placed the item in the municipal election. Furthermore, the former pool was in use for approximately 45 years and has long been a part of the visual character of the Project area as a recognizable local and regional aquatic facility. Substantial evidence supports the determination that the former Belmont Pool building as the baseline for aesthetics impacts is appropriate because it is based on recent historical use and its presence on the project site.

## 4.1.5 Project Impacts

### Threshold 4.1.1: Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

**Less than Significant Impact.** This subsection addresses public views of scenic vistas within or near the Project site and how they would be affected by the proposed Project. There are no locally designated scenic vistas on or surrounding the Project site but expansive ocean views from public right of ways can generally be considered to have aesthetic value.

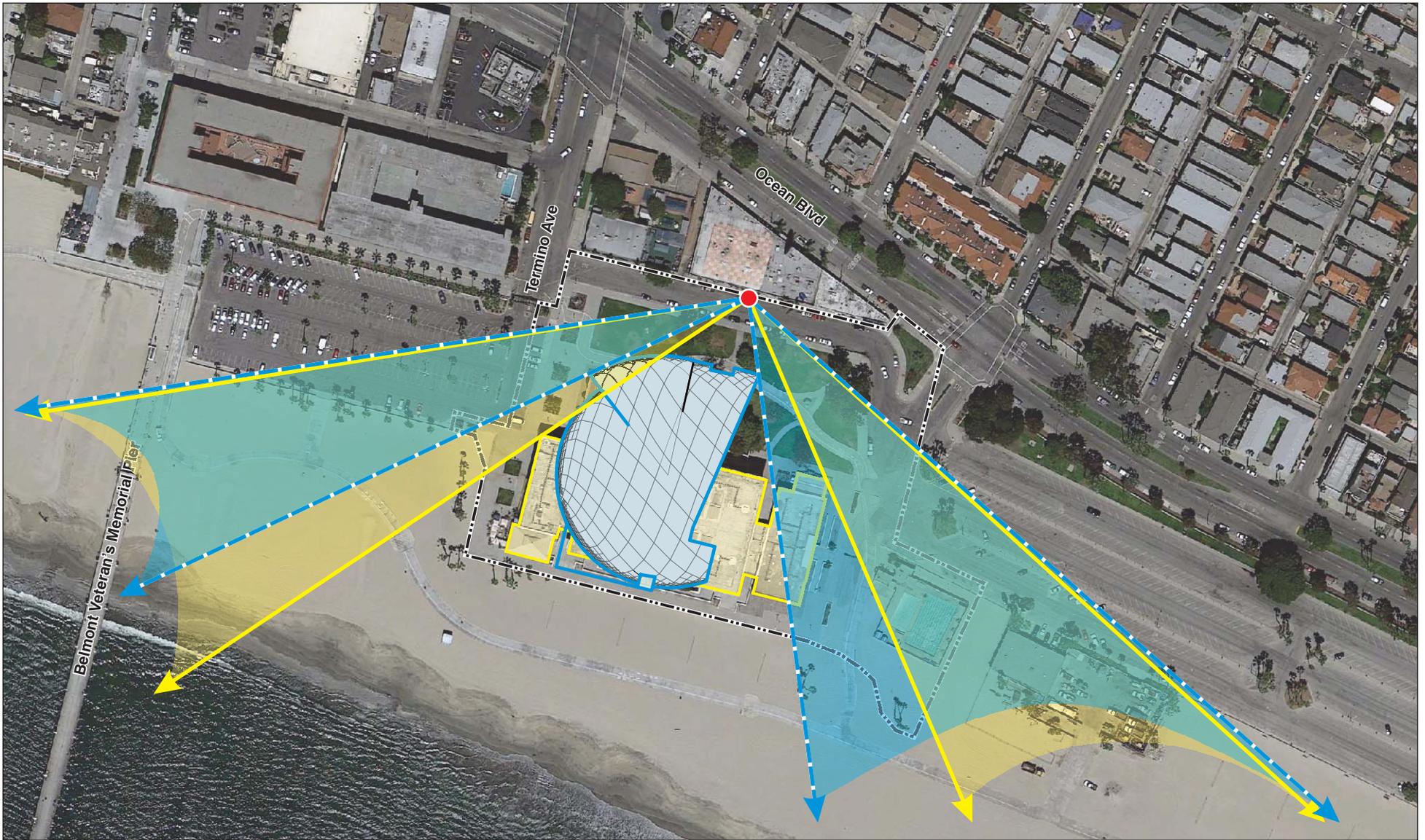
The former Belmont Pool complex was a rectangular building that was aligned lengthwise from east to west along the southern boundary of the Project site, adjacent to the beach. As shown in Figures 4.1.2 and 4.1.3, the design of the 60 ft block building maximized scale and mass and obstructed the majority of the coastal views on and directly surrounding the site.

As shown in Figure 4.1.4, Pre- and Post-Project Building Orientation, the proposed pool complex would be located generally on the building footprint of the former Belmont Pool complex. However, the Bubble component of the proposed development would be the only part of the complex with notable architectural features. The outdoor pool area would be a flat pool deck area surrounded by transparent 8 to 15 ft Plexiglas wall that would not block views. The proposed restaurant would have minor contributions to the overall scale and mass of the proposed Project as it would be located at the southeastern corner of the site and consist of a 1,500-square foot (sf) one story structure with an architectural feature made from the same ETFE material which would arch over the small structure (like an awning) in a sloping manner (see Figures 3.7a and 3.7b in Chapter 3.0, Project Description).

Figure 4.1.4 depicts a viewing area comparison between the former Belmont Pool and the proposed Bubble. The former Belmont pool obstructed views of the coastline from viewers on and surrounding the Project site due to the location and mass of the building on the project site. Buildings associated with the proposed Project – specifically the Bubble structure – would be situated on the western portion of the site and be aligned in a south to north direction. As shown in Figure 4.1.4, the proposed placement and alignment of the Bubble would allow for increased views of the coastline that were previously blocked by the former Belmont pool. Additionally, as shown in the building elevations (Figures 3.7a and 3.7b), the curved elliptical shape of the Bubble reduces the structural scale and mass, when compared to a traditional rectangular building, by eliminating the corners of the building, allowing for an increase in viewable area. Therefore, the change in the building placement on the site, in combination with the reduced structural mass from the Bubble's elliptical design, would not result in a substantial adverse effect on scenic vistas and a less than significant impact would occur. No mitigation is required.

### Threshold 4.1.3: Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

**Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation.** This subsection addresses how public views of the Project site and its surroundings would be affected by the proposed Project. Changes in the visual character of the site and the surrounding area would occur with implementation of the proposed Project during both the construction and operational phases.



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LEGEND

- Project Site
- Viewshed with Existing Structure
- Viewshed with Proposed Structure



SOURCE: Google Earth

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FIGURE 4.1.4

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**Construction.** Construction of the proposed Project would involve on-site grading and construction activities that would be visible to travelers along Ocean Boulevard and other adjacent roadways. Construction activities for the proposed Project would be short-term and temporary fencing would be placed along the perimeter of the site to screen construction activities from the street level. The construction staging area would be located in the southwest portion of the Beach Parking Lot, where it will not interfere with the operation of the temporary pool, the beach maintenance facility, or vehicle movements through the parking lot. It is recognized that construction fencing could serve as a potential target for graffiti if not appropriately monitored. Mitigation Measure 4.1.1 would require that temporary barriers and walkways are maintained in a visually attractive manner throughout the construction period. Mitigation requiring the maintenance of the Project site fencing would ensure that impacts associated with unwanted debris and graffiti would be less than significant.

**Operations.** As described above, the visual character immediately surrounding the Project site is representative of a fully built out urban area containing a mix of commercial and residential structures of varying sizes and architectural styles combined with distinct recreational uses such as the Belmont Pool, beach area, volleyball courts, Rosie's Dog Beach, kite surfing, and the Pier.

The passive park and the main pool complex are the two main components that would make up the aesthetic character of the proposed Project. Conceptual elevations of the proposed structure are presented in Figures 3.7a and 3.7b.

**Proposed Pool Complex.** The proposed Project includes the replacement of the former Belmont Pool complex with a new pool complex at the same location. The structural components of the proposed pool complex would consist of an indoor pool structure (the Bubble), the outdoor pool area, and the restaurant/gathering area. The Bubble structure would be the most prominent structure of the complex with a maximum height of 71 ft above the adjacent grade with a contemporary and unique elliptical design resembling a bubble. The structure would be comprised of a web of structural steel, infilled with ethylene tetrafluoroethylene (ETFE) plastic, creating a continuous compound curved shell over the indoor pools. The ETFE roof system has been designed to allow diffuse sunlight to illuminate a major portion of the building's interior. At night, the structure can be illuminated in any color with interior lights glowing through the air-filled plastic pillows which make up the arched roof. Rather than be completely round, the Bubble is designed to have a facade on the eastern side, separating the indoor pools from the outdoor pool area. The outdoor pool area includes two pools surrounded by a Plexiglas barrier ranging in height from 8 to 15 ft. The transparent barrier would maintain views of the surrounding areas.

The Bubble and outdoor pool areas make up the majority of the structural area and would be situated along the southern boundary of the Project site. The restaurant and gathering area is located at the southeastern corner of the Project site and is made up a large open area adjacent to the beach. This area is where visitors would be dropped off and picked up as they arrive and depart the pool complex. The only structural component of this area is the one-story 1,500-square-foot (sf) outdoor cafe just to the south of the drop-off area. Although separated from the Bubble, the outdoor cafe also contains an architectural feature made from the same ETFE

material which would arch over the small structure (like an awning) in a sloping manner and provide an architectural connection to the other areas of the Project. Therefore, the pool complex would not degrade the visual character of the site or the surrounding area. Potential impacts would be less than significant and no mitigation would be required.

**Architecture and Scale.** When compared to the former Belmont Pool, the proposed Project would represent a substantial change in the architectural styles of the structures. The former Belmont Pool was built in a traditional style that emphasizes height and scale achieved through towering columns that extended from the ground to the roof. As previously discussed, the placement, alignment, and mass of the proposed Project is substantially different than that of the former Belmont Pool.

As illustrated in Figures 4.1.5 and 4.1.6, Post-Project Key Views, the Bubble structure is visible in all four key views. However, as compared to the former Belmont Pool structure, the curved elliptical shape of the Bubble reduces the structural scale and mass. In addition, the ETFE roof system allows the sunlight to be diffused, illuminating the building's interior. The transparency of the Bubble structure results visually reduces the mass of the building.

Although the styles in architecture are dramatically different, both structures are designed to serve the purpose of being a regional attraction for recreational and competitive aquatics. Both structures are designed to be taller and larger than the buildings surrounding the site in order to accomplish the goal of attracting visitors. Although the proposed Project would result in a change in architectural style compared to the former Belmont pool complex, the large scale nature of the Belmont Pool complex would remain. Also, the proposed Project would replace the former Belmont Pool complex with another pool complex of the same use and would not change the visual character of the Project site as a regional attraction. Therefore, the architecture and scale of the proposed Project would not degrade the visual character of the site and surrounding area and less than significant visual character impacts would result from the implementation of the proposed Project. No mitigation is required.

**Building Height.** The proposed Project would include the replacement of the Belmont Pool complex with a larger and contemporary pool complex. The former Belmont Pool structure reached a height of 60 ft for the entire length of the 230 ft long building, which was well above the permitted 30 ft limit of the Park District design guidelines. As illustrated in Figure 4.1.7, North Elevation Comparison, the proposed Bubble structure would also be above the 30 ft height limit but reach a maximum of 71 ft above the adjacent grade, requiring the approval of a variance to allow for the increased building height. Although the peak of the Bubble structure would be approximately 11 ft higher than the former Belmont Pool, the proposed structure would be elliptical, not rectangular, and only the peak of the structure would exceed the height of the original structure. From the highest point, the roof would taper downward toward the sides of the Bubble, as shown in the building elevations (Figures 3.7a and 3.7b) and only a small portion of the proposed Project would exceed the height limitation. In comparison, the original rectangular pool complex had an entire roofline of the pool building at 60 ft. Therefore, the visual character of the site and surrounding area would not be degraded and less than significant visual character



**Key View 1:** View of the Project site facing south at the intersection of Termino Avenue and Midway Street.



**Key View 2:** View of the Project site facing southwest from the intersection of Ocean Boulevard and Bennett Avenue.

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FIGURE 4.1.5

*Belmont Pool Revitalization Project*  
Post-Project Key Views 1 & 2

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**Key View 3:** View of the Project site traveling west on Ocean Boulevard at the intersection with Prospect Avenue.



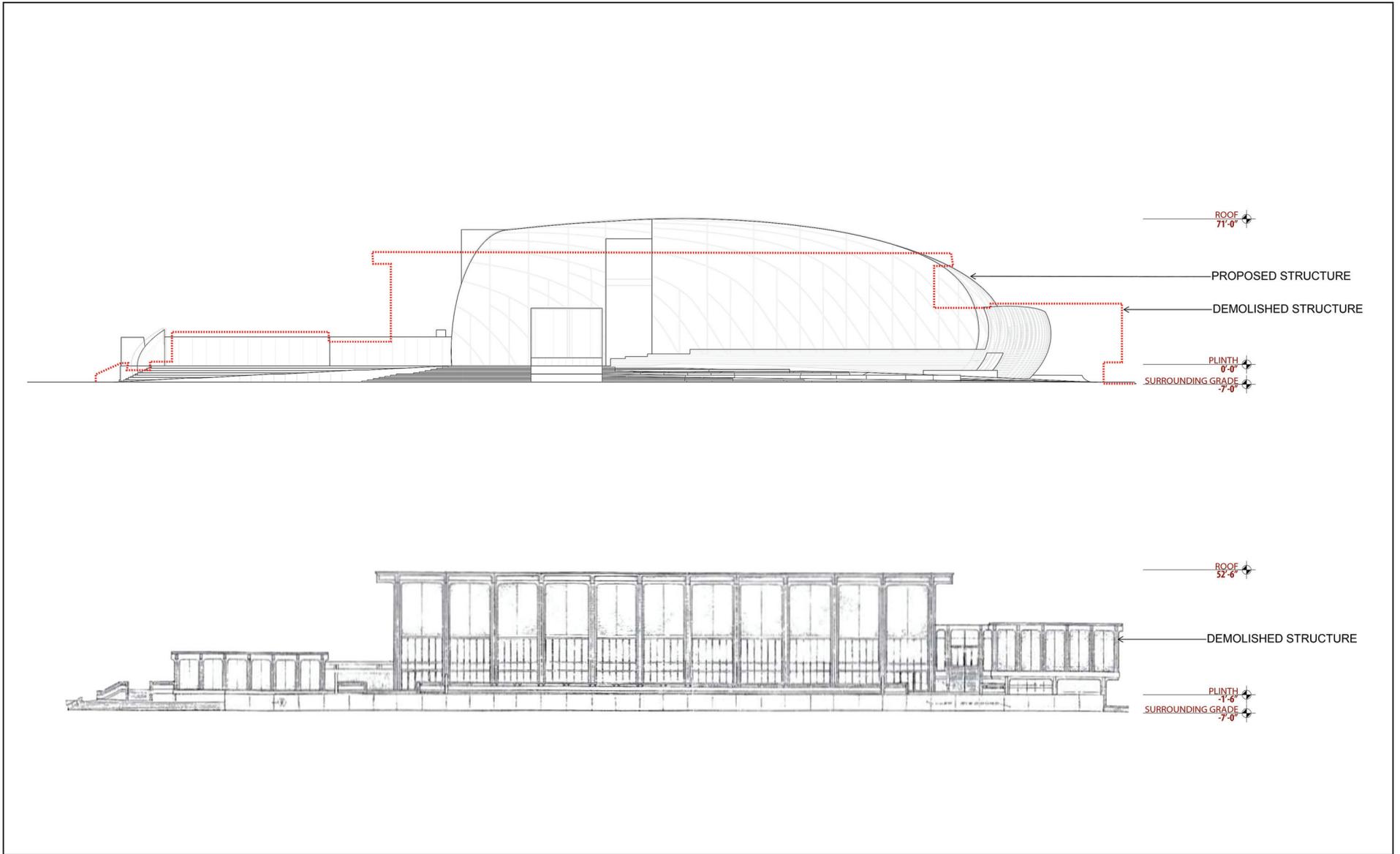
**Key View 4:** View of the Project site from the midway point on the Pier facing northeast.

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FIGURE 4.1.6

*Belmont Pool Revitalization Project*  
Post-Project Key Views 3 & 4

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FIGURE 4.1.7

*Belmont Pool Revitalization Project*  
 North Elevation Comparison

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impacts would result from the implementation of the proposed Project, and no mitigation is required.

**Signage.** Several categories and sizes of signs would be incorporated into the design of the proposed Project. The monument signs would be used to identify the building and would be located where vehicles approach and enter the site, as well as on the building itself. Monument signs would be located over the main entry on both the north and south sides. Directory signs would include smaller signs located at or near points of entry and pathway intersections, and would direct visitors to the various functional areas of the Project site. Room and place signs would be fixed on the building to identify specific facility functions and direct visitors to their intended destination. All signs would be designed and installed in compliance with the City's Municipal Code. As such, the proposed Project would not result in a significantly adverse impact related to on-site signage, and no mitigation is required.

**Passive Park.** As illustrated in Figure 4.1.8, Open Space Comparison, the existing site includes 118,790 sf of open space area and 45,160 sf of green space on the northern half of the Project site. The park contains large lawn areas and mature ornamental trees. Ornamental tree species that are currently found in the Project study area include eucalyptus, ficus, oak, ornamental, and paperbark. As shown in key views presented in Figures 4.1.2 and 4.1.3, much of the existing landscaping obstructs views of the former Belmont pool and coastal views from Ocean Boulevard.

The proposed 127,085 sf of open space and a 55,745 sf passive park would be situated along the western and northern portions of the Project site as depicted in Figure 3.9, Conceptual Landscape Plan (see Chapter 3.0, Project Description). Landscaping would consist of a mixture of native and non-native drought-tolerant species to harmonize with the building design. Although the alignment of the passive park would be modified, the proposed Project would result in an increase of 8,295 sf of open space and 10,585 sf of passive park space, and would be intended for general park uses, similar to the uses at the existing passive park. It should be noted that in consideration of the drought conditions and State mandates, the design team will continue develop the passive park areas in close coordination with the City through the schematic, design development and construction documents design phases. Therefore, aesthetic impacts related to the removal of existing on-site landscaping or the installation of proposed landscaping would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

**Conclusion.** Overall, the visual character of the site would be altered because the design of the proposed structure would be dramatically different than the former Belmont Pool complex. However, the proposed Project design appears to have comparable mass, scale, and height and would also be aligned to provide for increased coastal views. Additionally, the proposed Project would replace one large recreational pool complex with another recreational pool complex and although the design would be different, the visual character of the Project site would not be substantially degraded with the implementation of the proposed Project. Project impacts would be less than significant impacts, and no mitigation is required.

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FIGURE 4.1.8



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**City Designated Scenic Route.** While Ocean Boulevard adjacent to the Project site is not a designated State Highway, the Scenic Routes Element of the City's General Plan has identified the portion of Ocean Boulevard adjacent to the Project site as a designated scenic route associated with the Recreational Scenic Route.<sup>1</sup> While implementation of the proposed Project would modify the views to and from the Project site by replacing the former Belmont Pool with a new pool complex, the proposed Project would not substantially alter the existing character of the surrounding area. Motorists along Ocean Boulevard would experience increased views of the coastline following implementation of the proposed Project. Therefore, potential impacts of the proposed Project on the Recreational Scenic Route would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

**Threshold 4.1.4: Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?**

**Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated.**

**Construction.** Lighting required during the construction period could generate light spillover in the vicinity of the proposed Project site. However, construction activities would occur only during daylight hours, and any construction-related illumination would be used for safety and security purposes only (in compliance with LBMC light intensity requirements) and would occur only for the duration required for the temporary construction process. With adherence to existing LBMC regulations, light resulting from construction activities would not substantially impact sensitive uses, substantially alter the character of off-site areas surrounding the construction area, or interfere with the performance of an off-site activity. Therefore, construction of the proposed Project would not create a new source of substantial light that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area, and light impacts associated with construction would be less than significant.

**Operation.** Light-sensitive uses surrounding the Project site include the Surf Terrace and Belmont Shore condominiums to the west and the multi-family residences to the north and northeast across Ocean Boulevard.

Nighttime lighting present in the vicinity of the proposed Project site consists of street lights and vehicle headlights on nearby roadways; building facade and interior lighting; lighting for the temporary pool; and pole-mounted lighting in the parking areas adjacent to the Project site. The proposed Project site itself contains 2 streetlights along East Olympic Plaza, 18 pole-mounted lights along the pathways in the passive park, and lighting for the outdoor pool. Previously, the former Belmont Pool building facade contained structural and signage lighting, as well as 7 additional lamppost lights on the west and south that were removed as a part of the emergency demolition of that structure.

The proposed Project would include the installation of new lighting for the pool, which will replace the existing lighting for the outdoor pools, park, and associated street lights. The replacement lighting would be installed to facilitate outdoor competitive aquatic events and

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<sup>1</sup> City of Long Beach. Planning Department. Long Beach General Plan Program, Scenic Routes. Prepared May 9, 1975.

recreational swimming that may be held in the evening or at night. Additionally, nighttime lights are necessary for the safety and security of the visitors and employees on site and along the park pathways, but outdoor light fixtures would be shielded so that lighting is focused downward to restrict any light spillover. Therefore, implementation of the proposed Project may introduce new sources of light and glare, such as increased intensity of outdoor pool lighting. However, compliance with the existing City Municipal Code would reduce lighting impacts from the outdoor pool to less than significant by shielding glare and directing lighting on site. No mitigation is required.

The compound curved shell of the Bubble component of the proposed Project would be covered with an ETFE roof system, which has been designed to allow diffuse sunlight to illuminate a major portion of the building's interior. At night, the structure can be illuminated in any color with interior lights glowing through the air-filled plastic pillows that make up the arched roof thereby creating an additional source of light to the area. However, the illumination of the Bubble would be from the interior of the building and would not include direct light shining outward from the Project site. The covering used for the Bubble would be translucent, which will diffuse light emitted from the facility giving the overall appearance of the Bubble at night to be of a glowing half-globe as illustrated by Figure 4.1.9, Nighttime View Simulation, instead of a glaring dome with direct light shining out in all directions. Additionally, the lighting of the Bubble structure would be limited to 10:00 p.m., the operational hours of the facility, and would not be lit throughout the night. Therefore, the increase in ambient lighting would not interfere with activities or nighttime views in the area. No mitigation measures would be required.

## Glare.

**Construction.** Daytime glare can result from natural sunlight reflecting from a shiny surface that would interfere with the performance of an off-site activity, such as the operation of a motor vehicle. Construction activities are not anticipated to result in flat, shiny surfaces that would reflect sunlight or cause other natural glare. Minor glare from sunlight on construction equipment and vehicle windshields is not anticipated to impact visibility in the area because the construction site would be fenced and shielded from pedestrian views and passenger vehicle views. In addition, construction vehicles would not be operating at night and thus would not create nighttime sources of glare. Therefore, impacts due to glare generation and interference with the performance of an off-site activity or adverse effects on views would be less than significant during construction.

**Operation.** Daytime glare can result from natural sunlight reflecting from a shiny surface that would interfere with the performance of an off-site activity, such as the operation of a motor vehicle. Reflective surfaces can be associated with window glass and polished surfaces. The ETFE used for the Bubble shell is made from a low reflective plastic. Nighttime glare sources from the proposed Project could include lighting from illuminated signage and vehicle headlights.

Vehicles traveling on Ocean would not be in a direct line of sight to receive reflected sunlight due to the presence of the proposed landscaping on the Project site. Reflective sunlight would not reach the commercial uses to the north because of the landscaping along the perimeter of the site



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FIGURE 4.1.9

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as well as the lack of reflective material. While the proposed Project's building accents may include metal or other highly polished surfaces around building entrances, such accents would be small relative to the size of the facade and would be partially blocked by landscaping buffers. Therefore, the reflection toward oncoming motorists from the building materials used in the proposed Project's buildings would be minimal.

The only nighttime glare-sensitive uses would be vehicles traveling on surrounding streets. Nighttime glare-producing components of the proposed Project would include signage, exterior building lighting, parking lot lighting, and lighting from vehicles visiting the Project site. The interior lighting of the Bubble would not be considered a glare producing light as the structure would be illuminated from the inside which would produce a glow and not a direct light.

The Project signage would be illuminated by light-emitting diode lights in conformance with the existing City Municipal Code, and would be required to obtain Site Plan Review and approval. Additionally, similar to daytime glare, nighttime glare would be reduced due to the obstruction from the proposed landscaping in the interior portions of the Project site. The nighttime glare produced by the signage, exterior lighting, and vehicular headlights would be similar to the existing nighttime glare produced by the surrounding residential and commercial uses and would not result in enough glare to be considered substantial or affect nighttime views.

Therefore, impacts due to glare generation and interference with the performance of an off-site activity or adverse effects on views would be less than significant during operation of the proposed Project, and no mitigation is required.

#### **4.1.6 Cumulative Impacts**

Cumulative impacts refer to the combined effect of Project impacts with the impacts of other recent and reasonably foreseeable future projects. The cumulative study area for aesthetic impacts is limited to the immediately adjacent area within view of the Project site. As discussed above, the proposed Project is located in an urban area with a number of existing sources of light and glare. Because the proposed Project would replace the former Belmont Pool with a modernized pool complex, light and glare as a result of proposed Project would be consistent with the baseline conditions in the area and would not impact views in the area. The potential aesthetic impacts to scenic vistas, scenic resources, and existing visual character were evaluated and found to be less than significant. Therefore, the contribution of the proposed Project to potential cumulative visual/aesthetic impacts in the study area is considered less than significant.

#### **4.1.7 Level of Significant Prior to Mitigation**

Construction of the proposed Project would result in the possibility of unwanted debris and/or graffiti on construction site fencing and temporary pedestrian pathways. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1.1 would be required to maintain the scenic quality of the Project site during project construction. All other potential construction impacts would be less than significant. Operation of the proposed Project would result in less than significant impacts related to aesthetics, light, and glare, and would not contribute to cumulatively significant aesthetic impacts.

#### 4.1.8 Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures are proposed to minimize temporary visual impacts due to construction of the proposed Project.

**Mitigation Measure 4.1.1: Maintenance of Construction Barriers.** Prior to issuance of any construction permits, the City of Long Beach (City) Development Services Director, or designee, shall verify that construction plans include the following note: During construction, the Construction Contractor shall ensure, through appropriate postings and daily visual inspections, that no unauthorized materials are posted on any temporary construction barriers or temporary pedestrian walkways, and that any such temporary barriers and walkways are maintained in a visually attractive manner. In the event that unauthorized materials or markings are discovered on any temporary construction barrier or temporary pedestrian walkway, the Construction Contractor shall remove such items within 48 hours.

#### 4.1.9 Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

As previously stated, potentially significant impacts to the scenic quality of the Project site could occur during Project construction as a result of possible postings and unauthorized materials on the temporary construction barriers and temporary pedestrian walkways. With implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1.1, all identified potentially significant impacts associated with unauthorized materials or markings on construction fencings and/or walkways would be mitigated to a less than significant level. All other potential impacts related to Aesthetics would be less than significant.