

## **5.1 Aesthetics**

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## 5.1 AESTHETICS

This section describes the existing visual environment within and surrounding the Project site and analyzes potential Project impacts to the visual character/quality of the site and vicinity. Consideration of public scenic vistas and views, impacts to scenic resources, and the creation of new sources of light and glare are also analyzed in this section. The analysis is based on photosimulations (prepared by RBF Consulting, March 2014), site reconnaissance, and the *Fred Nelles School Tree Evaluation* (Tree Evaluation), prepared by Arborgate Consulting, Inc., dated June 12, 2014 (provided as [Appendix 11.3, \*Tree Evaluation\*](#)).

### 5.1.1 EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

#### VISUAL CHARACTER/QUALITY

The Project site is approximately 76 acres and is generally bound by Whittier Boulevard and Sorensen Avenue to the northeast and northwest, respectively, Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital (PIH) to the southeast, commercial uses to the east, and commercial and residential uses to the west. Elevations on the Project site range from approximately 170 to 230 feet above mean sea level, generally sloping to the southwest.

The Project site is comprised of two areas: a former youth correctional facility area (approximately 74 acres); and an adjacent commercial area (approximately 2 acres) located at the eastern corner of the site. The youth correctional facility consists of 52 vacant buildings on-site. The various buildings have varying architectural styles and include dormitories (or cottages), staff residences, school buildings, an auditorium, a gymnasium, and several support structures. Eight of the 52 buildings have been identified as having varying degrees of historic significance.<sup>1</sup> The youth correctional facility is surrounded on all sides by an approximately 15-foot high chain link and razor wire fence. Security lighting associated with the youth correctional facility is located around the site's perimeter. Paved surface parking lots exist along Whittier Boulevard and paved private roads traverse the site. The two-acre commercial area at the eastern corner consists of an auto recycling business.

No regular maintenance of the site occurs. Given the age of the facility and time since the Fred C. Nelles Youth Correctional Facility ceased operations in 2004, portions of the site show signs of deterioration. Onsite buildings appear to range from poor to good condition. As the buildings have been vacant for some time, visible cracks, peeling paint, possible roof leaks, and other indications of potential deterioration have occurred.<sup>2</sup> Much of the on-site vegetation is in poor condition due to a lack of maintenance and adequate irrigation. [Exhibit 5.1-1, \*Existing On-Site Conditions\*](#) provides photographic documentation of typical existing conditions of the Project site.

Based on the Tree Evaluation, approximately 460 trees are located on the Project site. All of the trees on-site are stressed from being abandoned and unirrigated for the last 10 years since the closure of the youth correctional facility in 2004. Many of these trees have cracks, breaks, and tear-outs due to lack of care during and after the youth facility operations. As such, many of the trees on the Project site exhibit poor structural stability. There are other trees on the Project site that are in relatively good condition, including many of the cypress, deodars, eucalyptus, jacarandas, pines, and palm trees.

<sup>1</sup> GPA Consulting, *Lincoln Specific Plan Historical Resource Report*, October 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Page & Turnbull, *Fred C. Nelles Youth Correctional Facility Re-Use Feasibility Study For 8 Historic Buildings*, November 14, 2011.



The surrounding area is characterized by a mix of commercial, industrial, and residential uses. The following is a discussion of the off-site land uses surrounding the Project site:

- **North:** Whittier Boulevard forms the northeastern site boundary. Surface parking and low-rise commercial uses are located across Whittier Boulevard, generally north of Philadelphia Street. Industrial uses and surface parking are generally located across Whittier Boulevard, south of Philadelphia Street. The commercial and industrial areas located directly along Whittier Boulevard are zoned Whittier Boulevard Specific Plan (WBSP). Sorensen Avenue forms the site's northwestern boundary. North of Rincon Drive, adjacent uses along Sorensen Avenue include low-rise commercial uses and surface parking. This commercial area is also zoned WBSP.
- **South:** The Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital (PIH) is located directly south of the Project site. PIH is comprised of multiple structures and a large surface parking lot. It is separated from the Project site by a 15-foot high security fence. The PIH site is designated as Hospital in the *City of Whittier General Plan* (General Plan) and zoned WBSP. Residential uses within the City and within the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI) are located directly southwest of the Project site beyond the youth correctional facility's 15-foot high security fencing.
- **East:** Low-rise industrial uses, including a self-storage business with surface parking, border the site to the east. The adjacent uses are separated from the Project site by the correctional facility's security fencing. These uses are zoned WBSP. Uptown Whittier, the City's historic mixed use district, is located approximately one-half mile east of the Project site via Philadelphia Street.
- **West:** The City boundary makes up the site's western boundary. Single-family residential uses are located west of the Project site. A church and related surface parking are located adjacent to the Project site near the intersection of Sorensen Avenue and Havenwood Drive. Both uses are separated from the Project site by the correctional facility's security fencing. The adjacent uses are located within unincorporated Los Angeles County and the City's SOI area.

Refer to Exhibit 5.1-2, Existing Off-Site Conditions, for photographs of the off-site uses surrounding the Project site.

## Designated Entryways and Design Corridors

The Environmental Resource Management Element (ERME) of the General Plan designates scenic resources, gateways, design corridors, and other significant visual elements throughout the City within the Scenic Corridor Plan. According to the General Plan, the City has scenic qualities in the form of tree-lined streets, roadways leading into the hills, views of the Puente Hills from the community, and aerial views of the City from the surrounding foothills. The Puente Hills, located approximately 2.5 miles to the east of the Project site, are the only locally-designated scenic resources located within the viewshed of the Project site. In the immediate vicinity of the Project site, views to the Puente Hills are afforded along Whittier Boulevard and Sorensen Avenue. Whittier Boulevard, adjoining the Project to the northeast, is designated as a "Design Corridor" in the City's Scenic Corridor Plan of the ERME. Design Corridors have development standards and design standards for landscaping, utility lines, signage, trail systems, preservation of scenic resources (e.g., the Puente Hills), scaling, building materials, and other visual components to preserve the corridors' qualities.



View of vacant classrooms located in the northern portion of the Project site.



View of the former Chapel located in the central portion of the Project site.



View of vegetation and a former living unit within the central portion of the Project site.



View of a disturbed open space area along the southern portion of the Project site.



View of existing barbed wire security fencing along the southeastern portion of the Project site.



View of a former living unit and basketball court/recreation area within the southern portion of the Project site.



View of an existing mature tree located in the central portion of the Project site.



View of a former living unit and disturbed vegetation located in the southeastern portion of the Project site.



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View of commercial uses to the north of the Project site.



View of commercial use to the east of the Project site.



View of residential uses to the west of the Project site along Sorensen Avenue.



View of vacant disturbed land to the north of the Project site.



The City also designates entryways into the City that provide access to scenic corridors, design corridors, and other areas of aesthetic value. According to the ERME, entryways in the vicinity of the Project site (that also afford views to the Project site) include the intersection of Philadelphia Street and Whittier Boulevard.

## Key Views

For the purposes of this analysis, a Key View is an area (in this case, the Project site) that can be seen from a particular public location. Characteristics for each Key View are defined within foreground, middleground, and/or background views. Characteristics located within foreground views are located at close range and tend to dominate the view. Characteristics located within middleground views are distinguishable, yet not as sharp as those characteristics located in the foreground views. Features located within the background views have few details and distinctions in landform and surface features. The emphasis of background views is an outline or edge. Silhouettes and ridges of one landmass against another are the conspicuous visual aspects of the background, with the skyline serving as the strongest line. Objects in the background eventually fade to obscurity with increasing distance.

RBF staff visited the site to take photographs and make observations from Key Views that were selected in consultation with City staff; refer to Exhibit 5.1-3, Key View Location Map, for the locations of the selected Key Views. The camera locations were recorded utilizing Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment. A Fuji G-617 Panoramic camera with a 1:8/105 millimeter lens was selected as the primary photographic source, as it yields an accurate representation of human visual perception. Backup photographs were also taken using a Nikon D1X digital camera with a fixed 50 millimeter lens.

Six Key Views were selected for this analysis. Key Views 1 and 2 were selected to depict potential impacts to character/quality from residential uses adjoining the Project site, Key Views 3 and 4 were chosen to depict potential impacts to the character/quality along Whittier Boulevard, and Key Views 5 and 6 were selected to determine the potential impacts from residential uses, motorists, and bicyclists along Sorenson Avenue. The following describes the existing character of the site and its surroundings from Key Views 1 through 6.

Key View 1. Views from this Key View are afforded to the Project site from single family residential uses to the west along Reichling Lane; refer to Exhibit 5.1-4, Key Views 1 and 2 - Existing Conditions. A cul-de-sac and residential uses are visible in the foreground. Middleground views are afforded to residential uses and existing mature trees on the Project. Due to the topography and existing structures and vegetation, no background views are afforded.

Key View 2. This Key View represents views from single family residential uses along Bexley Drive, adjoining the Project site to the west; refer to Exhibit 5.1-4, Key Views 1 and 2 - Existing Conditions. Foreground views to Bexley Drive and single-family residential structures are visible. Foreground views also include ornamental vegetation and mature trees. Middleground views to existing razor fencing, mature trees, overhead power lines, and lighting structures on the Project site are visible. The visible fencing materials and large lighting standards detract from the overall visual quality of this landscape.



Source: Google Earth aerial, 2014.

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# Key View Location Map

Exhibit 5.1-3



KEY VIEW 1



KEY VIEW 2



Key View 3. Views from this Key View are afforded to the Project site from northbound motorists traveling along Whittier Boulevard; refer to Exhibit 5.1-5, Key Views 3 and 4 – Existing Conditions. This Key View represents typical long-range views of the Project site in the City. Views of ornamental vegetation, mature trees, billboards, Whittier Boulevard, and commercial uses are visible in the foreground. Middleground views to the Philadelphia Street/Whittier Boulevard intersection, and mature trees are visible. Although mature landscaping is present in this Key View, other visible features (i.e., overhead power lines, and billboard features) detract from the overall visual quality of this view.

Key View 4. This Key View is located along Philadelphia Street, to the east of the Project site, and represents views from motorists traveling westbound towards the Project site; refer to Exhibit 5.1-5, Key Views 3 and 4 - Existing Conditions. Foreground views to the Whittier Boulevard/Philadelphia Street intersection, sidewalks, and a lighting fixture are afforded. Mature trees, the Project site (the main entrance from Whittier Boulevard is noted), and portions of the Whittier Boulevard/Philadelphia Street intersection are also afforded. Middleground views to the existing on-site buildings, mature trees, and power poles are visible. The mature vegetation in this view increases the visual unity in this Key View, and reduces the appearance of hardscape features.

Key View 5. This Key View is located along Sorensen Avenue, adjoining the northern boundary of the Project site. This Key View represents views from motorists and pedestrians traveling along Sorensen Avenue towards Whittier Boulevard, and views from single family residential uses residents north of Sorensen Avenue; refer to Exhibit 5.1-6, Key Views 5 and 6 Existing Conditions. Views of Sorensen Avenue, power poles/overhead power lines, mature trees, street signage, residential uses, the existing on-site barbed-wire fence, and scattered vegetation are afforded in the foreground and middleground of this Key View. Background views to the Puente Hills are visible. Although views to the Puente Hills are present, visible fencing materials and vertical overhead power lines detract from the overall visual quality of this view.

Key View 6. This Key View represents views from single family residential uses along Keith Drive, to the north of the Project site; refer to Exhibit 5.1-6, Key Views 5 and 6 Existing Conditions. Foreground views consist of Keith Drive, single family residential uses, street signage, mature trees, power poles and overhead power lines, street lighting, and on-site fencing bordering Sorensen Avenue. Middleground views to existing on-site structures are included within this Key View. The existing mature ornamental landscaping increases the overall visual quality experienced at this Key View.

## Scenic View Corridors

No designated State scenic highways are present in or near the City of Whittier.<sup>3</sup> The nearest officially designated State scenic highway is State Route (SR) 2 (Angeles Crest Scenic Highway), located on the north side of the San Gabriel Mountains, approximately 16 miles to the northwest of the City. Refer to the “Visual Character/Quality” section above for a description of the existing Design Corridor (Whittier Boulevard) located in the viewshed of the Project site.

<sup>3</sup> State of California Department of Transportation, *California Scenic Highway Mapping System*, [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic\\_highways/](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/), Accessed on February 24, 2014.



KEY VIEW 3



KEY VIEW 4



KEY VIEW 5



KEY VIEW 6



## Trail Corridors

The Whittier Greenway Trail, located approximately 0.13-mile to the east of the Project site, runs parallel to Whittier Boulevard in a northwest/southeast direction. The Whittier Greenway Trail provides bicyclists and pedestrians connections to the northern and southern portions of the City, and affords views to the Puente Hills to the east. Views from this trail to the Project site are not available as a result of intervening structures and mature trees.

## LIGHT AND GLARE

Lighting effects are associated with the use of artificial light during the evening and nighttime hours. There are two primary sources of light: light emanating from building interiors passing through windows and light from exterior sources (i.e., street lighting, building illumination, security lighting, parking lot lighting and landscape lighting). Light introduction can be a nuisance to adjacent residential areas, diminish the view of the clear night sky, and if uncontrolled, can cause disturbances. Uses such as residences and hotels are considered light sensitive since occupants have expectations of privacy during evening hours and may be subject to disturbance by bright light sources. Light spill is typically defined as the presence of unwanted light on properties adjacent to the property being illuminated. With respect to lighting, the degree of illumination may vary widely depending on the amount of light generated, height of the light source, presence of barriers or obstructions, type of light source and weather conditions.

Glare is primarily a daytime occurrence caused by the reflection of sunlight or artificial light by highly polished surfaces, such as window glass or reflective materials and, to a lesser degree, from broad expanses of light-colored surfaces. Perceived glare is the unwanted and potentially objectionable sensation as observed by a person as they look directly into the light source of a luminaire. Daytime glare generation is common in urban areas and is typically associated with buildings with exterior facades largely or entirely comprised of highly reflective glass. Glare can also be produced during evening and nighttime hours by the reflection of artificial light sources such as automobile headlights. Glare-sensitive uses include residences, hotels, transportation corridors, and aircraft landing corridors.

Lighting within the Project site and surrounding area is typical of developed urban areas. Primary sources of light and glare in the area include motor vehicle headlights, streetlights, parking lot and exterior security lighting, and interior building lighting. The primary lighting sources currently present on the Project site consist of security lighting and interior structures associated with the youth correctional facility and auto recycling business.

### 5.1.2 EXISTING REGULATORY SETTING

#### LOCAL

##### Whittier General Plan

The General Plan contains goals and policies that guide growth and development within the City. City policies pertaining to visual character are contained in the Land Use Element and ERME of the General Plan. In addition to the scenic corridors and design corridors within the ERME discussed above, the goals and policies which pertain to the Project include the following:



## Land Use

**Goal 3:** Maintenance and development of commercial and retail uses.

Policy 3.3: Protect the aesthetic qualities of commercial areas.

Policy 3.6: Encourage attractive, safe, comfortable developments.

**Goal 6:** Retention and development of scenic areas and open space.

Policy 6.5: Work with involved individuals and agencies to promote preservation of Puente Hills.

**Goal 8:** Preserve Institutional Uses

Policy 8.1: Preserve and maintain institutional uses.

## Environmental Resource Management

**Goal 1:** Preserve or conserve natural and cultural resources that have scientific, educational, economic, aesthetic, social, and cultural value.

Policy 1.5: Encourage property owners to preserve areas with native vegetation, wildlife habitat, and visual beauty.

**Goal 6:** Maintain amenities along major roadways which provide beauty, identity, and form to the community and to neighborhoods within the community.

Policy 6.1: Upgrade entryways and areas along major thoroughfares through the City.

Policy 6.2: Protect scenic corridors that have aesthetic, recreational, cultural, or historic values.

## **Whittier Municipal Code**

The *Whittier Municipal Code* (WMC) provides various requirements for development within the City that are related to aesthetics. Chapter 18 of the WMC, Zoning (Zoning Code), provides requirements for allowable uses and community design that are intended to ensure that new development projects are designed and implemented in a manner that is consistent with the existing aesthetic environment in the surrounding area. Specifically, Division I of the Zoning Code regulates, restricts, and segregates the uses of lands and buildings; regulates and restricts the height and bulk of buildings; regulates the area of yards and other open spaces about buildings; and regulates the population density and development intensity. Division II of the Zoning Code regulates signage to ensure compatibility and adequate design and placement. Division VI of the Zoning Code provides the City's *Community Design Guidelines*, which provide specific development guidelines for grading, siting, setbacks, architecture, and lighting.

## **Whittier Parkway Tree Manual**

The *Whittier Parkway Tree Manual* provides guidelines to help reduce impacts on City trees and to provide for effective management of the urban forest. The guidelines within the *Parkway*



*Tree Manual* pertain to tree care, preservation, pruning, removal, and replacement. These guidelines are applicable to City parkways, which are defined as a strip of right-of-way within which the City plants and maintains its urban forest. As it relates to the proposed Project, the *Parkway Tree Manual* would be applicable to areas along the Project frontage on Whittier Boulevard and Sorensen Avenue, where numerous trees may be affected by roadway improvements. For trees affected by construction projects on City property, the Parkway Tree Manual requires replacement of the affected tree(s) in accordance with International Society of Arboriculture standards.

### 5.1.3 IMPACT THRESHOLDS AND SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

The environmental analysis in this section is patterned after the Initial Study Checklist recommended by CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, as amended, and used by the City of Whittier in its environmental review process; refer to [Appendix 11.1](#). The Initial Study includes questions relating to aesthetics, light, and glare. The issues presented in the Initial Study Environmental Checklist (*CEQA Guidelines Appendix G*) have been utilized as thresholds of significance in this section. Accordingly, a project may create a significant environmental impact if it causes one or more of the following to occur:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista (refer to [Section 8.0, \*Effects Found Not To Be Significant\*](#)).
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Based on these significance thresholds and criteria, the Project's effects have been categorized as either "no impact," a "less than significant impact," or a "potentially significant impact." Mitigation measures are recommended for potentially significant impacts. If a potentially significant impact cannot be reduced to a less than significant level through the application of mitigation, it is categorized as a significant unavoidable impact.

### 5.1.4 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

#### SHORT-TERM VISUAL CHARACTER/QUALITY

- **CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT COULD RESULT IN SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS RELATED TO TEMPORARY DEGRADATION OF THE VISUAL CHARACTER/QUALITY OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.**

***Impact Analysis:*** Short-term construction-related activities associated with the proposed Project would temporarily alter the existing visual character of the Project site and surrounding



area. The visual impact associated with construction activities would involve graded surfaces, construction materials, equipment, and truck traffic. Soil would be stockpiled and equipment for grading activities would be staged at various locations. In addition, temporary structures could be located on on-site during various stages of construction. Materials storage areas and/or construction debris piles may be visible at staging areas. Exposed trenches, roadway bedding, spoils/debris piles and steel plates would be visible during construction of proposed street and utility infrastructure improvements. These construction activities and equipment could temporarily degrade the existing visual character and quality of the Project area during the construction phase. For the purposes of this analysis, Phase 1 of the Project would consist of development of Planning Areas 1 through 8, and all infrastructure improvements, excluding the Elmer Avenue extension within Project site boundaries. Phase 2 of the proposed Project would consist of the development of Planning Area 9 (Future Expansion Area), and construction of the Elmer Avenue extension. The timing for implementation of Planning Area 9 is currently unknown and is dependent upon the Planning Area 9 property owner's plan for long-term use of the property. It should be noted that the specific construction activities for the Project's anticipated land uses are not proposed according to a phasing schedule. Rather, development would be dictated by market demand and phased accordingly.

Surrounding uses that would have views of the Project site during construction include residential uses, recreational, and institutional uses. Other viewers would include motorists and bicycle users traveling along Whittier Boulevard, Philadelphia Street, and Sorensen Avenue. Adjoining residents would have direct views to the Project's construction activities, which would visibly degrade the character for this area. However, construction-related activities are not considered significant, because they would be short-term and temporary. While demolition of on-site structures would occur throughout the site, building activity would not be continuous and would proceed in different areas of the site and at different times as various Planning Areas are constructed. Temporary screening of a particular construction staging site would partially relieve the visual impacts typically associated with construction activities (Mitigation Measure AES-1). Compliance with Mitigation Measure AES-1, which would be incorporated into construction documents, would reduce potential construction-related visual impacts to less than significant levels.

### ***Mitigation Measures:***

- AES-1 Prior to the issuance of a Demolition or Grading Permit, the Project Applicant shall submit a Construction Management Plan for review and approval by the City of Whittier City Engineer. The Construction Management Plan shall, at a minimum, indicate the equipment and vehicle staging areas, stockpiling of materials, fencing (i.e., temporary security/screening fencing with opaque material), nighttime lighting (if proposed), and construction haul route(s). Staging areas shall be screened from view from residential properties as feasible. Construction worker parking may be located off-site with prior approval by the City; however on-street parking of construction worker vehicles on residential streets shall be prohibited. Vehicles shall be kept clean and free of mud and dust before leaving the Project site. Surrounding streets shall be swept as necessary such that they are maintained free of dirt and debris.

***Level of Significance:*** Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated.



## LONG-TERM VISUAL CHARACTER/QUALITY

- **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT COULD RESULT IN SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS RELATED TO THE LONG-TERM DEGRADATION OF THE VISUAL CHARACTER/QUALITY OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.**

### *Impact Analysis:*

### **Visual Quality/Character**

The visual analysis of a project must consider its visual quality and compatibility in consideration of the area's visual sensitivity. The following analysis examines the proposed Project for compatibility with the character of the surrounding land uses, in consideration of the following visual elements:

- Architectural features (e.g., repetition of design elements: materials, texture, colors, form, type of construction, details, and building systems);
- Scale and Height (e.g., size/height relationships between adjacent buildings, and between buildings and adjacent open spaces); and
- Property setbacks (e.g., setbacks providing distance and/or a visual buffer between the Project site and receptors).

### **PHOTOSIMULATIONS**

Project implementation would alter the visual character of the site and its surroundings, as the Project site would be developed with 750 residential dwelling units, 208,350 square feet of commercial land uses, and 4.6 acres of open space. Photosimulations were prepared to demonstrate the degree of change resulting from Project implementation (Key Views 1 through 6). Although the photosimulations illustrate an architectural level of detail, they are subject to change and are intended to depict overall massing and scale, and are intended to generally illustrate the form, size, and function of the Project's proposed structures, in the context of their environmental setting. The following analyzes the Project's effects on the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings, as depicted from adjacent single family residential uses (Key Views 1 and 2), Whittier Boulevard (Key Views 3 and 4), and residential uses/motorists along Sorensen Avenue (Key Views 5 and 6).

Key View 1. Project implementation would result in increased visible hardscape; refer to Exhibit 5.1-7, Key View 1 - Existing and Proposed Conditions. The existing 15-foot high chain link and razor wire fence would be replaced with an approximately five-foot wall over a retaining wall that would be a maximum of nine feet in height (for a combined maximum height of approximately 14 feet). The existing mature trees in this view would be replaced with new ornamental plantings, and new structures that could be up to 35 feet in height. The proposed uses would be similar in character to the surrounding residential structures.

Key View 2. Project implementation would result in removal of the mature vegetation and increased hardscape; refer to Exhibit 5.1-8, Key View 2 - Existing and Proposed Conditions. The existing 15-foot high chain link and razor wire fence would be replaced with an approximately five-foot wall over a retaining wall that would be a maximum of nine feet in height (for a combined maximum height of approximately 14 feet). Views of mature trees and lighting



EXISTING CONDITION



PROPOSED CONDITION



EXISTING CONDITION



PROPOSED CONDITION



fixtures would be replaced with medium density residential structures (Planning Area 4) that would be up to 35 feet in height. New ornamental landscaping would be visible. Visible massing would be increased, compared to that of the surrounding residential uses.

Key View 3. Project implementation would result in removal of the mature vegetation and increased hardscape; refer to Exhibit 5.1-9, Key View 3 - Existing and Proposed Conditions. Foreground/middleground views of the existing mature ornamental vegetation would be replaced with commercial buildings (up to 55 feet in height), new landscaping, street lighting, entry monumentation, and a paved entryway from Whittier Boulevard. Middleground views of mature trees, and the existing entry monumentation associated with the former youth correctional facility would be removed with implementation of the proposed Project. The proposed commercial uses at this Key View would be similar in massing and scale compared to the existing commercial uses to the east.

Key View 4. Project implementation would result in removal of the mature vegetation and increased hardscape; refer to Exhibit 5.1-10, Key View 4 - Existing and Proposed Conditions. Foreground/middleground views of the existing mature ornamental vegetation would be replaced with commercial buildings (up to 55 feet in height), new landscaping, street lighting, entry monumentation, and a paved entryway from Whittier Boulevard. Middleground views of mature trees, and the existing entry monumentation associated with the former youth correctional facility would be removed with implementation of the proposed Project. The proposed commercial uses at this Key View would be similar in massing and scale compared to the existing commercial uses to the east.

Key View 5. Project implementation would result in increased streetscape, associated vegetation, and roadway improvements along Sorensen Avenue; refer to Exhibit 5.1-11, Key View 5 - Existing and Proposed Conditions. Foreground/middleground views of Sorensen Avenue and residential uses would remain. On the south side of Sorensen, existing views of a 15-foot razor wire fence would be replaced with ornamental vegetation and landscaping, and commercial uses. Background views of the Puente Hills would remain similar to the existing condition.

Key View 6. Project implementation would alter the visual character of the area; refer to Exhibit 5.1-12, Key View 6 - Existing and Proposed Conditions. Foreground/middleground views of Sorensen Avenue and residential uses would remain. On the south side of Sorensen, existing views of a 15-foot razor wire fence and mature vegetation would be replaced with ornamental landscaping, and high density residential uses (up to 45 feet in height). A newly paved residential entryway to the Project site is noted in middleground views. Existing on-site buildings would be replaced with residential structures with larger massing than the surrounding community.

### Lincoln Specific Plan

The Specific Plan includes a detailed set of design guidelines related to site planning, building massing, façade design, entry design, walls, roofs, and architecture, among others. The design guidelines are proposed to govern design and development associated with the residential, commercial, and open space development to ensure consistency and high-quality design throughout the Project site. Also included in the design guidelines are site wide grading, common open space, and public plaza design requirements. The design guidelines pertain to the following:



EXISTING CONDITION



PROPOSED CONDITION



EXISTING CONDITION



PROPOSED CONDITION



EXISTING CONDITION



PROPOSED CONDITION



EXISTING CONDITION



PROPOSED CONDITION



- Residential Design Guidelines: Provides recommendations regarding varying housing types and architectural styles, building massing (to be scaled for a visually pleasing environment), garage placement, façade design, windows, entry design, doors, walls, roofs, and screening of mechanical equipment.
- Commercial Design Guidelines: Provides guidelines for building massing, façade design, entry design (e.g., highly visible entrances with architecturally enhanced features), windows, doors, walls, roofs, and screening of mechanical equipment.
- Site Wide Design Guidelines: Provides guidelines for grading (e.g., suggesting graded slopes to be landscaped), and common open space/public plazas (e.g., provide shade, seating areas, and night lighting).
- Architectural Style Design Guidelines: Provides guidelines to encourage high quality architecture for the proposed residential and commercial land uses at the Project site. Residential architectural styles should consist of the following architectural styles: Craftsman, Spanish, American Cottage, Monterey, American Traditional, and Tudor Revival. The commercial land uses would consist of Spanish Colonial and Tudor Revival architecture.
- Landscape Design Guidelines: Provides guidelines for planting, tree replacement and relocation, compatible plant species, entry monumentation, signage, community walls, lighting, and the Freedom Trail.

The Specific Plan also includes development standards that establish the permitted uses and physical development standards for the site, generally based upon the City's Zoning Code. The following development standards would be established, as they pertain to aesthetics/light and glare:

- Residential Development Regulations: Provides regulations applying to lot size/dimensions, lot coverage, setbacks, building heights, open space, and landscaping; and
- Commercial Development Regulations: Provides regulations applying to lot size/dimensions, lot coverage (maximum Floor Area Ratio), setbacks, building heights, outdoor seating, parking areas, service and loading areas, and landscaping and screening provisions.

## RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

A maximum of 750 residential dwelling units would be constructed at buildout of the Specific Plan. All residential dwellings would be required to comply with the Specific Plan Design Guidelines and Development Regulations, which would require that the proposed architecture consist of Craftsman, Spanish, American Cottage, Monterey, American Traditional, Tudor Revival, or Spanish Colonial styles. Proposed residential structures on the Project site would reach a maximum of 45 feet tall (Planning Area 7). The Specific Plan allows for a maximum density of 35 du/acre in Planning Area 7.

Future residential development would be subject to compliance with the Specific Plan's standards regarding maximum lot coverage (55 to 65 percent, depending on the housing type) and minimum distance between buildings (10 to 20 feet, depending on housing type). The



architectural design of the residential dwellings would be encouraged to be architecturally interesting, promote diversity, and be visually compatible with Whittier's older established neighborhoods. Foundations and exterior walls would be smooth or minimally texturized, and constructed of stucco, synthetic stucco, or cement plaster that complements the buildings' architectural style. The color palette for walls would be required to include light, soft, earth tones, yellows, browns, and terra cottas.

Roof design and style would be consistent with the buildings' architectural style, and a variation in rooflines would be implemented to minimize the scale of large residential buildings. Low pitched, sloping hipped and gabled roofs would be utilized. Mansard roofs would only be permitted when designed appropriate to the architectural style. All proposed color treatments would be compatible with the roof color. Retaining walls and fencing would consist of materials architecturally compatible with any adjacent structures and landscaping. Wall/fencing features would incorporate landscaping material that would blend with the surrounding areas. All exterior colors would be encouraged to blend with the structure's architecture and the natural surroundings.

Community walls would be located along the south, lower southwest, east, and lower southeast perimeter where existing residential uses are present. There would be no walls other than low retaining walls or fences located along the north and northwest perimeter at Sorensen Avenue and Whittier Boulevard adjacent to commercial uses, except for loading and/or trash area screening. Buffer walls up to 10 feet in height may be located between commercial and residential uses within the Project site.

Community walls, retaining walls, or fences facing roadways would be built of decorative materials consistent with the entry monumentation, including masonry and/or concrete. Low walls or privacy fencing up to six feet in height would be constructed on residential lots. Exposed walls and fences facing external roadways would be no greater than six feet in height, except as necessary for acoustical purposes to satisfy the City's *Noise Ordinance*. Typical edge conditions along the residential portions of the Project site (i.e., the eastern, southeastern, southwestern, and western boundaries of the site) would typically include a 5- to 10-foot wall over an 8- to 9-foot retaining wall. The maximum combined wall height would be approximately 18 feet. Slopes between retaining walls and the perimeter community wall would be landscaped with material from a designated plant list to be approved by the City as part of the Specific Plan.

The proposed Project would also construct an entry boulevard from Whittier Boulevard (80 to 82-foot right-of-way [ROW]), Heritage Court Commercial Street (80-foot ROW), local street with Freedom Trail (69-foot ROW), local streets (60-foot ROW), roundabouts, and alleys/private drives (minimum 20-foot ROW).

## COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The proposed Project consists of 208,350 square feet of commercial uses at buildout (including the Future Expansion Area). The Project would be comprised of two primary commercial areas, The Market, and Heritage Court. The Market would be an approximate 12.9-acre community shopping center that would accommodate potential uses such as retail stores, restaurants, banks, drug stores, grocers, and other commercial uses. The Market would be located at the corner of Whittier Boulevard and Sorensen Avenue, with its main entry perpendicular to Philadelphia Street. While this would be the primary pedestrian and vehicular access point, two entry points would also be located from Sorensen Avenue. Heritage Court would provide a pedestrian-oriented boutique-style shopping experience on approximately 2.8 acres in the northeastern portion of the Project site. The proposed entry boulevard from Whittier Boulevard



(south of Philadelphia Street) would provide direct access to Heritage Court. The Future Expansion Area would consist of a two-acre commercial development consistent with The Market and Heritage Court.

Pursuant to the proposed Specific Plan Design Guidelines, the commercial areas within the Project site (i.e., Heritage Court and The Market) would be developed to be compatible with Spanish Colonial and Tudor Revival architecture styles. Building entries and storefronts would be close to one another to minimize walking distance, and would be appropriately scaled. Large scale retail buildings would contain architectural design elements (i.e., arcades, loggias, colonnades, display windows, awnings, or similar architectural features) that would reduce overall massing. Similar to the design guidelines for residential development, commercial development would include a color palette of light, soft, earth tones, yellows, browns and terra cottas. Restaurants in the commercial areas would be permitted to provide outdoor seating areas; maximum capacity, design, and other criteria for these areas would be determined during the development review process.

The proposed commercial areas would also be required to comply with the Specific Plan Development Regulations. The commercial development standards include a minimum lot area of one acre, a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.35, a maximum building height of 50 feet (the maximum height for architectural projections, such as towers and cupolas, would be 55 feet), and building setbacks predicated on the hierarchy of streets; refer to Table 5.1-1, Commercial Building Setbacks.

**Table 5.1-1  
Commercial Building Setbacks**

Location	Setback
From Whittier Boulevard ROW	15 Feet
From Sorensen Avenue ROW	15 Feet
From Private or Local Street	10 Feet
From Interior Property Line	10 Feet
From Interior Property Line adjacent to Residential Land Use	20 Feet 30 Feet for loading areas
Source: Danelian Associates, <i>Lincoln Specific Plan</i> , August 22, 2014.	

### Commercial Parking Areas

The parking field between commercial buildings and Whittier Boulevard would be separated by a landscaped berm containing a minimum 10-foot wide planting area with buffer landscaping. The landscaped berm would be designed for sufficient site visibility of the on-site buildings while minimizing the visual dominance of vehicles parked along the street frontage. Adequate pedestrian access to buildings would be provided through parking fields. A walkway from Whittier Boulevard would provide a clear route to the main building entrance and be designed to be a minimum five-foot width on both sides of the entry, separated from vehicle areas by curbing, landscaping and trees. Additionally, surface parking areas would be planted with 24-inch (or larger) box shade trees, and landscaped screening buffers would be planted along the perimeter of parking areas.



## Commercial Service/Loading Areas and Screening

All commercial loading areas would be screened from adjacent public streets, residential uses and open spaces through the use of landscaping, earthen berms, and/or decorative walls or fencing. Loading areas would be located in the rear of buildings, away from streets and public open space areas. All storage, including cartons, containers, materials, or trash would be shielded from view within a building or area enclosed by a solid fence or wall not less than six feet in height. Screening walls would be positioned between adjacent residential uses. Trash/recycling, utilities, mechanical equipment, storage, and service equipment would be located away from streets and public open space areas.

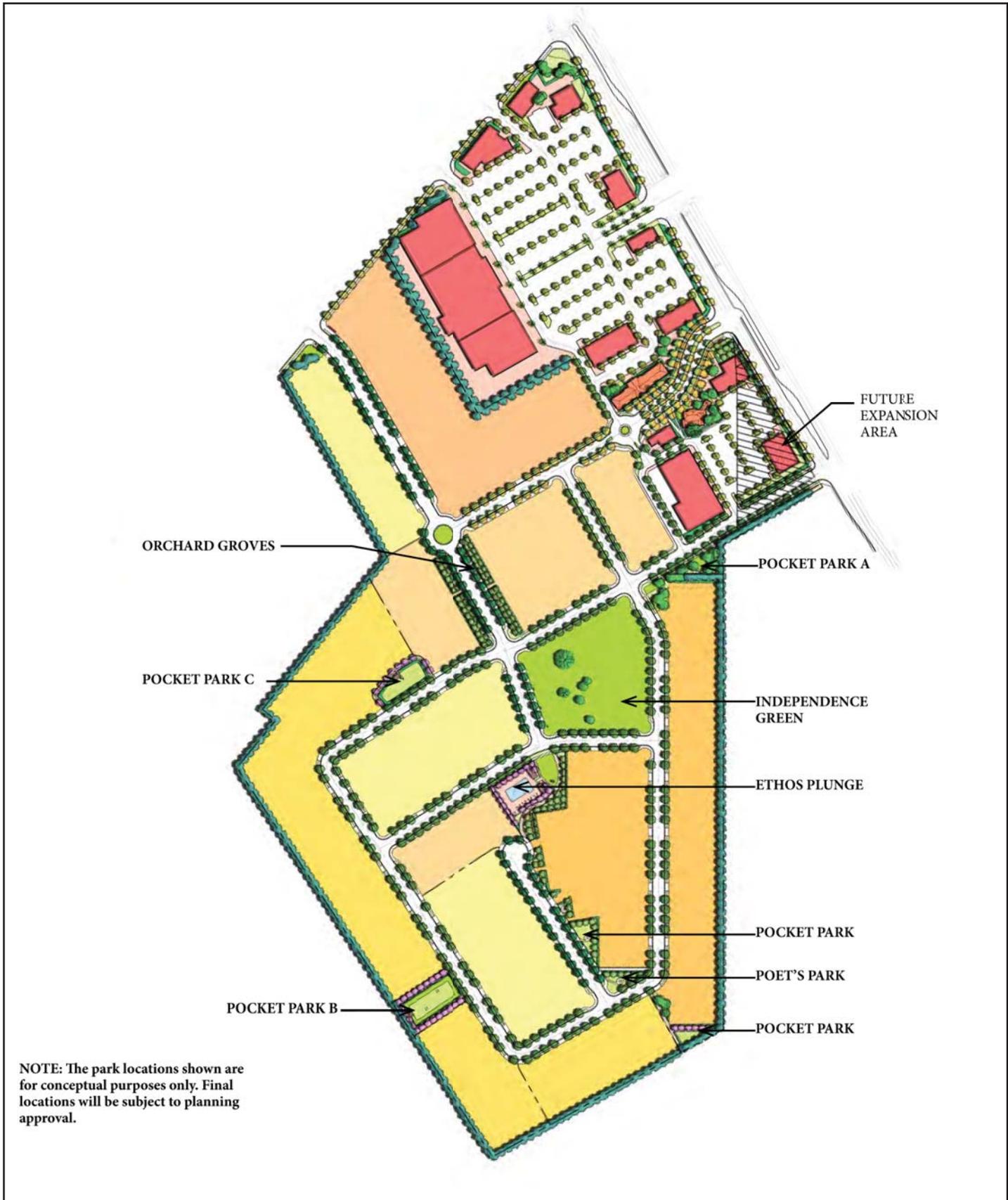
## LANDSCAPING

Based on the Specific Plan Landscape Design Guidelines, the Project site would be intermixed with a variety of tree plantings, landscaped areas, and open space areas; refer to Exhibit 5.1-13, *Conceptual Landscape Plan*. The landscape concept would require the reuse of some existing plant species on-site, as well as the addition of new plant species from the Specific Plan's plant palette. Tree-lined streets and strategic locations of landscaped areas would provide a consistent, legible, cohesive pattern throughout the Project site to provide a unique identity and sense of place. Final landscape submittals for developments within the Project site would be reviewed for consistency with the Specific Plan Landscape Design Guidelines, as required by the Specific Plan. A tree survey would be performed to identify trees worthy of replacement or relocation, which would be also be reviewed and approved by the City of Whittier during development plan review.

## TREES

Approximately 460 trees are currently located on the Project site. Based on the Tree Evaluation, these trees have been unirrigated for at least the last 10 years; as a result, many are in a poor health. These trees have created hazardous conditions on-site due to hanging tree branches, shallow root conditions, declining health, and structural deficiencies. The Tree Evaluation evaluated the conditions of the on-site trees, and provided recommendations for their removal, preservation, and/or transplantation. The Tree Evaluation confirmed that approximately 217 of the 460 trees on the Project site have a deficient structural condition, and therefore would pose a public safety hazard if retained. Many of these trees are dead, in ill health, and/or are impacted by pests. It is anticipated that these trees would not survive under current conditions. Of the 460 trees, 34 were identified as stumps or were completely missing at the time of the Tree Evaluation. The remaining 243 trees would not be able to be preserved due to Project construction activities, and therefore, would be removed. The Tree Survey also evaluated the potential for on-site tree transplantation. Of the 460 trees, it was determined that only 3 trees are in sufficiently healthy condition to potentially survive transplantation. As such, given the limited number of sufficiently healthy trees, transplantation is not considered a suggested strategy to minimize impacts to on-site trees.

The existing trees on-site, particularly on the site perimeter, contribute to the aesthetic character of the site. Though many are in poor condition (as noted in the Tree Evaluation), they are visible from adjacent uses and surrounding roadways (including Whittier Boulevard and Sorensen Avenue). The removal of these trees may result in an alteration of the visual character within the Project area. However, as the City does not have a formal City-wide tree policy in place with regard to tree removal, Mitigation Measure AES-2 has been incorporated in order to reduce impacts in this regard. The 243 healthy trees identified in the Tree Evaluation



Source: City of Whittier, *Lincoln Specific Plan*, August 22, 2014.

NOT TO SCALE



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LINCOLN SPECIFIC PLAN  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

# Conceptual Landscape Plan

Exhibit 5.1-13



would be replaced at a ratio of two trees for each healthy tree removed. Implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-2 would result in a net increase in trees on-site, and benefits related to tree health would also occur given the number of existing trees that are in poor condition. Implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-2 would reduce impacts to a less than significant level regarding tree removal and degradation of visual character/quality.

## **MONUMENTATION**

Monumentation would occur at prominent entry points to the Project site and would be designed to establish a theme that references historic elements and signals a transition into the community. Monuments would be treated with similar materials, colors, and forms to contribute to a consistent and recognizable community character. The key materials (brick and masonry), would create a style of monumentation that reflects historic architecture at the Project site. Entry monuments would be located at key entries such as those proposed on Whittier Boulevard.

## **SIGNAGE**

Separate sign programs would be required for The Market and Heritage Court per the Whittier Zoning Ordinance, Section 18.75.020, Master Sign Program - Multi-Tenant Properties. Neighborhood level signage design would be cohesive with entry monumentation and architectural styles. Wayfinding signage would be simple, clear and unobtrusive. Neighborhood level, in-tract signage would be utilized in the Specific Plan area.

## **FREEDOM TRAIL**

The Freedom Trail would be the major pedestrian and biking path on-site. Materials for the Freedom Trail would include brick and concrete for the Heritage Court Entry and Main Residential Entry areas. The Trail would be composed of sandblasted asphalt. Wayfinding signage within the Trail would be consistent with the proposed entry monuments and would contain historic reference elements.

## **CONCLUSION**

Overall, implementation of the proposed Project would result in the removal of mature trees, increased visible hardscape, new landscaping, and increased visible massing compared to the existing surrounding communities. With implementation of the regulations presented in the Specific Plan as well as the existing regulations of the WBSP and/or the City's Zoning Code, visible hardscape would be reduced, resultant massing scale would be appropriate for the area, and new landscaping would be introduced. Further, in many areas of the site, the quality of the landscape would be improved as a result of removal of the existing perimeter security fencing, numerous existing vacant and aging structures (e.g., Key Views 2 and 5, where substantial portions of 15-foot high fencing and razor wire would be removed), and unhealthy trees. Implementation of the Specific Plan would ensure future development consistency with the Whittier design corridor, proposed development would be consistent with the historic character of the site, and replacement/relocation of trees would occur per Mitigation Measure AES-2. Thus, with implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-2, and compliance with the design guidelines and development regulations within the Specific Plan, the WBSP, and the City's Zoning Code, long-term impacts associated with the degradation of character/quality would be reduced to less than significant levels.



### ***Mitigation Measures:***

AES-2 All trees to be removed from the Project site shall be replaced at a 2:1 ratio with a minimum 24-inch box container size. The minimum brown trunk height for any palm trees shall be 12 feet. The Applicant shall submit a Tree Removal Plan to the City of Whittier Community Development Department prior to commencement of demolition, earthwork, and/or grading activities. The Tree Removal Plan shall display the location of trees to be removed, and the locations of new trees to be planted on the Project site.

***Level of Significance:*** Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated.

### **LIGHT AND GLARE**

- **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT COULD CREATE A NEW SOURCE OF LIGHT AND/OR GLARE, WHICH COULD AFFECT DAYTIME AND/OR NIGHTTIME VIEWS IN THE AREA.**

### ***Impact Analysis:***

#### **Short-Term Construction Impacts**

Construction activities are anticipated to occur primarily during the daytime hours. Light and glare during daytime construction activities would not impact surrounding uses. Construction activities would generally comply with the City's *Noise Ordinance*, which allows construction to occur between the hours of 7:00 AM and 8:00 PM Monday through Saturday, unless authorized in writing by the City's Director of Building and Safety. However, it is possible that nighttime or early start construction may be required for short durations (e.g., off-site roadway improvements that may occur at night to minimize inconvenience during peak travel periods, large concrete pours). In order to minimize any potential light/glare impacts to sensitive uses, all construction-related lighting would be down-directed and oriented away from adjacent residential areas and would consist of the minimal wattage necessary to provide safety at the construction site (refer to Mitigation Measure AES-3). Impacts in this regard would be reduced to less than significant upon implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-3.

#### **Long-Term Operational Impacts**

##### **LIGHTING AND GLARE FROM PROPOSED ON-SITE USES**

Implementation of the proposed Project would introduce additional sources of light and glare including light from proposed residential, commercial, and open space/park, uses, as well as security lighting and vehicle headlights at proposed roads and driveways. The Project site currently generates light from security lighting around the site's perimeter. Lighting is also being emitted from street lights and car headlights associated with adjacent roadways.

All lighting proposed on-site would be required to comply with the Specific Plan's lighting design guidelines (within Section 5, Design Guidelines, of the Specific Plan), which specify the allowable scale, architectural style, and placement of lighting fixtures, as well as provisions to avoid spill light to adjacent residential uses. Compliance with the design guidelines and development regulations within the Specific Plan, the WBSP, and the City's Zoning Code would



ensure that the proposed Project results in less than significant impacts regarding light and glare.

### **TRAFFIC SIGNALIZATION**

A traffic signal would be constructed at the future Whittier Boulevard/Heritage Court intersection. Signalized intersections are currently located along Whittier Boulevard, including at Whittier Boulevard/Sorensen Avenue, and Whittier Boulevard/Philadelphia Street intersections in the immediate vicinity of the Project site. As such, the proposed traffic signal at the Whittier Boulevard/Heritage Court intersection would not introduce a new source of light and glare that is would substantially alter the amount of light and glare in the site vicinity. Surrounding uses would not be significantly impacted by this proposed traffic signal. Therefore, a less than significant impact would occur in this regard.

### **VEHICLE HEADLIGHTS**

Implementation of the proposed Project would introduce new roadways and/or extension of existing roadways in the Project area. The Project would also result in new access points to and from the Project site along Sorensen Avenue and Whittier Boulevard. As such, new sources of light from vehicle headlights from on-site roadways, parking lots, and during ingress/egress from new entrances would result. However, light emitted from vehicle headlights along the on-site roadways, and vehicles entering/exiting the Project site would not be directed at residential structures located to the north or west, but would instead be directed along existing roadways, similar to the existing vehicle headlights experienced in the area. Further, compliance with the Specific Plan's screening requirements for parking areas, service and loading areas, and implementation of perimeter walls would ensure that light and glare impacts on from vehicle headlights would be reduced to less than significant levels.

#### ***Mitigation Measures:***

AES-3 All construction-related lighting shall include shielding in order to direct lighting down and away from adjacent residential uses and consist of the minimal wattage necessary to provide safety at the construction site. A construction safety lighting plan shall be submitted to the City of Whittier for review concurrent with the Grading Permit application.

***Level of Significance:*** Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated.

## **5.1.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

- **DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT AND OTHER RELATED CUMULATIVE PROJECTS COULD RESULT IN CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE IMPACTS RELATED TO AESTHETICS, LIGHT, AND GLARE.**



## *Impact Analysis:*

### **Short-Term Visual Character/Quality**

There is one cumulative project within the viewshed of the proposed Project (i.e., 57-unit condominium development, located at 12423 and 12425 Whittier Boulevard), approximately 0.25-mile to the east/southeast. However, with implementation of the recommended Mitigation Measure AES-1, the proposed Project would not result in the degradation of character/quality during construction. Further, other cumulative projects would be subject to any required mitigation measures as well as the WMC during construction. Thus, a less than significant cumulative impact would occur and the proposed Project would not contribute to the cumulative degradation of character/quality in the Project area as a result of short-term construction activities with implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-1.

### **Long-Term Visual Character/Quality**

As noted above, there is one cumulative project located within the viewshed of the proposed Project. Implementation of the proposed Project would result in the development of a mix of commercial, residential, and open space/parks uses on the Project site. The nearest cumulative project (i.e., 57-unit condominium development, located at 12423 and 12425 Whittier Boulevard) would redevelop an existing use at this location. The proposed Project would result in less than significant long-term visual character/quality impacts to the surrounding uses and visual resources upon implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-2 and compliance with the design guidelines and development regulations within the Specific Plan, the WBSP, and the City's Zoning Code. The development of these future condominiums in addition to the proposed Project would not have the potential to result in significant cumulative impacts to long-term character/quality. Further, as noted in the Project analysis above, in numerous locations the project is expected to result in a beneficial impact since the quality of the landscape would be improved as a result of removal of the existing perimeter security fencing, numerous existing vacant and aging structures, and unhealthy trees.

## **Light and Glare**

### **SHORT-TERM CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS**

As noted above, construction activities are anticipated to occur during the day hours. However, it is possible that construction could occur during the nighttime due to the City's allowable construction hours (between the hours of 7:00 AM and 8:00 PM Monday through Saturday, unless authorized in writing by the City's Director of Building and Safety). As such, it is possible that temporary nighttime construction lighting could be used during development on the Project site, and at the nearest cumulative project site (12423 and 12425 Whittier Boulevard). However, implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-3 would reduce lighting impacts from on-site nighttime construction activities to less than significant levels. Thus, with implementation of the recommended Mitigation Measures AES-3, the proposed Project would not result in significant cumulative impacts in this regard.

### **LONG-TERM OPERATIONAL IMPACTS**

Implementation of the proposed Project would introduce additional sources of light and glare including light from proposed residential, commercial, and open space/park, uses, as well as security lighting and vehicle headlights at proposed roads and driveways. However, all lighting



proposed on-site would be required to comply with the Specific Plan's lighting design guidelines which would ensure that light would be directed away from sensitive uses and properly shielded. All cumulative projects (including 12423 and 12425 Whittier Boulevard) would also be subject to the City's Exterior Lighting Standards for commercial, residential, and open space/parks uses in WMC Chapters 18.92, 18.94, and 18.96. Thus, with implementation of the proposed Specific Plan regulations and the City's Exterior Lighting Standards of the Municipal Code, cumulative projects are not anticipated to result in a significant cumulative impact and the proposed project would not result in significant cumulatively considerable impacts in this regard.

Due to the location of the only cumulative project in the viewshed of the proposed Project (12423 and 12425 Whittier Boulevard, approximately 0.25-mile from the Project site), the proposed project is not anticipated to be cumulatively considerable with regard to vehicle headlights and new traffic signals. No cumulative impacts would occur in this regard.

**Mitigation Measures:** Refer to Mitigation Measures AES-1 through AES-3.

**Level of Significance:** Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated.

## 5.1.6 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

No significant unavoidable impacts related to aesthetics, light, and glare have been identified following implementation of the recommended mitigation measures.

## 5.1.7 SOURCES CITED

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