

## 4.1 AESTHETICS

This EIR section analyzes the potential for adverse impacts on the existing character and visual quality of the project site and its surroundings resulting from implementation of the proposed project. Issues scoped out from detailed analysis in the EIR include impacts to scenic vistas and the potential to damage scenic resources within a state scenic highway, as the project site is not situated along a designated scenic highway. Full bibliographic entries for all reference materials are provided in Section 4.1.5 (References) at the end of this section.

All comments received in response to the Initial Study/Notice of Preparation (IS/NOP) circulated for the proposed project were taken in to consideration during preparation of this Environmental Impact Report, and if relevant, have been addressed in this section or others within this document.

### 4.1.1 Environmental Setting

#### ■ Overview of the Edinger Commercial Corridor

The Edinger Commercial Corridor generally extends from south of Edinger Avenue north to McFadden Avenue and from west of Goldenwest Street to east of Beach Boulevard. Land uses along Edinger Avenue primarily consist of commercial/retail-oriented uses, office and industrial developments. Major development projects along Edinger Avenue include the Golden West College to the west and the Bella Terra Mall to the east. In addition, a mix of residential, office, and hotel uses are located north of Edinger Avenue between the Bella Terra Mall and I-405 Freeway. A few vacant sites are also scattered throughout the area. As stated in the City's General Plan, uses along Edinger Avenue have little physical or visual connection. As a consequence, the corridor lacks an overall identity and strong physical anchors.

A majority of the commercial/retail uses along the Edinger Avenue Corridor exhibit the standard strip-mall development pattern, in which a row of shops sits behind parking. Heights along this portion of the corridor range from one to two stories. Landscaping along this portion of Edinger Avenue consists of trees and ornamental shrubs that are located along the edges of the retail/commercial centers. In addition, the median east of Gothard Street is landscaped with trees. The only exception to this pattern is Golden West College, which consist of educational buildings and a large amount of open space.

The Bella Terra Mall, which opened in September 2006, is the most prominent of commercial uses along the Edinger Commercial Corridor. The mall consists of an open air, retail, dining and entertainment complex with large public spaces spaced between intervening walkways or alleys. The architectural style of the mall consists of a mix of Classical, Neo-Classical, Baroque Rococo and even Modern and Post Modern styles with the Tuscan Village serving as the overall theme. The heights of the buildings range from 20 to 30 feet with tower elements providing variety to the roofline. Finally, limestone, tile and other materials in natural colors are incorporated into the façades of the structures to keep with the Tuscan Village motif, and the landscaping plan includes a high number of mature trees and small parks, accented with colorful plants.

Several high rise buildings are located north of the Bella Terra mall within the Towers at Bella Terra office development (previously called One Pacific Plaza). The architectural style of these structures is modern with facades containing a large amount of glass. The heights of these structures range from 5 to 12 stories. Landscaping consists of trees and ornamental shrubs.

## ■ Project Site Characteristics

### *Project Location and Boundaries*

The project site is located in the urbanized northeastern portion of the City of Huntington Beach in western Orange County, California. The project site is located approximately 3 miles from the City's Downtown and approximately four miles from the Pacific Ocean. As shown in Figure 3-2 (Project Site and Surrounding Land Uses), the 3.8-acre site is bounded by Center Avenue to the north; an existing commercial property to the south; Gothard Street to the west; and the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way and vacant commercial properties (currently proposed as The Village at Bella Terra project) to the east. A small site with two transmission towers abuts the northeast corner of the project site. The transmission towers are owned and operated by Southern California Edison (SCE). Open space on the grounds of Golden West College is located further to the west across Gothard Street.

### *Site Description*

The project site is currently developed with a shopping center known as the College Country Center. The shopping center contains approximately 60,000 square feet of commercial and office space located in four one-story retail buildings and one two-story office building.

The project site and surrounding vicinity is generally flat with no pronounced highs or lows. Vegetation on the project site consists of trees and ornamental shrubs.

## ■ Adjacent Land Uses

### *Surrounding Land Use*

Surrounding land uses consist of the Golden West Transportation Center operated by the Orange County Transportation Authority to the north and a mix of commercial, office, hotel and residential uses to the northeast, including Old World Village. In addition, a 230-foot strip of open space consisting of grass and small shrubs is located to the northeast. The strip serves as a right-of-way for high voltage transmission lines that are owned and maintained by SCE. The Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way and a commercial property consisting of a vacant Montgomery Wards Department Store are located to the east and southeast. The Village at Bella Terra project, a new mixed-use development that is an extension of the existing Bella Terra Mall (Phase I), is proposed at this location. Another commercial property consisting of the former Levitz furniture store is located adjacent to the project site to the south while Golden West College, an educational institution, is located to the west across Gothard Street. Open space consisting of lawns, bushes and trees associated with the Golden West College Campus is located to the northwest across Gothard Street.

## ■ Existing Views

### *Views of and through the Proposed Project Site*

Viewpoints of and surrounding the project site are identified in Figure 4.1-1 (Viewpoint Locations). There are ten viewpoints identified for the analysis of visual resources in this EIR. These viewpoints were chosen as a representative sample of the views available from the project site, as well as short- and long-range views of and through the project site from surrounding uses and the broader project vicinity. The general character of each of these view points is described below, and each of the viewpoints is shown in Figures 4.1-2 through 4.1-7.

#### **View Point 1**

This viewpoint consists of a view east down Edinger Avenue from the intersection of Gothard Street and Edinger Avenue. This view is illustrative of the development pattern along the eastern portion of the Edinger Commercial Corridor. As shown, the streetscape along Edinger Avenue dominates foreground. A mix of new and older commercial structures are visible with some of the newer structures located along the street edge. Landscaping consisting of trees, grass and ornamental bushes is located on the edge of the street and in the median. Promotional signage attached to street lights and commercial signage is also visible. Mid-range views consist of additional commercial structures while background views include expanses of open sky.

#### **View Point 2**

This viewpoint consists of a view south across a mall parking lot located along Edinger Avenue across from Golden West College. This view is illustrative of the standard strip-mall development pattern that is prevalent along the western portion of the Edinger Avenue Commercial Corridor. As illustrated, the parking lot dominates the foreground. Landscaping consists of small trees and bushes. Security lighting is also visible. Mid-range views consist of a vacant supermarket to the east and retail stores to the south. Background views include expanses of open sky.

#### **View Point 3**

This viewpoint consists of views to the north, looking from the northern border of the project site. The Goldenwest Transportation Center dominates the foreground. Landscaping on the transportation center site is also very prominent. The landscaping consists of tall palm trees located next to the bus docks and other medium sized trees in the parking lot. Bus shelters and security lighting are also visible. Mid-range views consist of the SCE right-of-way and high voltage transmission lines visible to the right of the bus docks. Small bushes and grass are currently located within the right-of-way. Background views also include expanses of open sky, although these expanses are interrupted by the trees located on the transportation center site.

#### **View Point 4**

This viewpoint consists of views to the northwest, looking from the northern border of the project site. Center Avenue is visible in the foreground, but the landscaping on the edge of the Golden West College campus on the opposite side of Gothard Street dominates the mid-range views. The landscaping consists of mature trees that are between 10 to 20 feet height and grass lawns. In particular, the landscaping partially conceals a parking lot that is also located on the edge of campus. Background views include expanses of open sky, although these expanses are interrupted by the trees located on the edge of campus.

#### **View Point 5**

This viewpoint consists of views to the northwest, looking from the western border of the project site. Gothard Street is visible in the foreground, but the landscaping on the edge of the Golden West College campus dominates the mid-range views. As discussed above, the landscaping consists of mature trees that are between 10 to 20 feet height and grass lawns. However, this viewpoint better illustrates the depth of the landscaping from the edge of the street. Along the edge of campus between the street and parking lots, the strip of landscaping is about 15 feet deep. In other locations along the edge of campus, the depth of landscaping is as much as 30 feet deep. A bus shelter and parking lot are also visible. Background views include expanses of open sky, although these expanses are interrupted by the trees located on the edge of campus.

#### **View Point 6**

This viewpoint consists of views to the northeast, looking from the second story along the eastern border of the project site. The rear parking lot on the project site and a utility line along the eastern border of the project site are visible in the foreground. Mid-range views consist of a vacant parking lot associated with the vacant Montgomery Wards building to the east and two-story commercial structures associated with the Old World Village to the northeast on the opposite side of Center Avenue. High voltage transmission lines above the vacant parking lot are also visible. Background views consist of tall office structures associated with the Towers at Bella Terra office development, which range from 5 to 12 stories in height. Expanses of open sky are also available.

#### **View Point 7**

This viewpoint consists of views south across the northern portion of the project site, looking from the southern edge of the Golden West Transportation Center. Center Avenue dominates the foreground. Views of commercial signage and landscaping are also visible. Mid-range views consist of the existing commercial structures on the project site. The presence of red-tile roofs on each structure is suggestive of the Spanish influence style of architecture that is prevalent through out Southern California. Background views also include expanses of open sky, although these expanses are interrupted by the trees located on the edge of the project site.



Source: PBS&J, 2007.

FIGURE 4.1-1  
Viewpoint Locations

0D2138700

The Ripcurl



**Viewpoint 1:** Looking east down Edinger Avenue



**Viewpoint 2:** Looking south across a strip mall

Source: PBS&J, 2007.



**FIGURE 4.1-2**  
**Viewpoints 1 and 2**

0D2138700

The Ripcurl



**Viewpoint 3:** Looking north from the northern border of the project site



**Viewpoint 4:** Looking northwest from northern border of project site

Source: PBS&J, 2007.



**FIGURE 4.1-3**  
**Viewpoints 3 and 4**

0D2138700

The Ripcurl



**Viewpoint 5:** Looking northwest from the western border of the project site



**Viewpoint 6:** Looking northeast from eastern border of project site

Source: PBS&J, 2007.



**FIGURE 4.1-4**  
**Viewpoints 5 and 6**

0D2138700

The Ripcurl



**Viewpoint 7:** Looking south across the northern portion of the project site



**Viewpoint 8:** Looking southeast across the northern portion of project site

Source: PBS&J, 2007.



**FIGURE 4.1-5**  
**Viewpoints 7 and 8**

0D2138700

The Ripcurl



**Viewpoint 9:** Looking east across the southern portion of the project site



**Viewpoint 10:** Looking southwest across the southern portion of project site

Source: PBS&J, 2007.



**FIGURE 4.1-6**  
**Viewpoints 9 and 10**

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The Ripcurl



**Viewpoint 11:** Looking north towards the adjacent SCE towers from the northeastern portion of the project site



**Viewpoint 12:** Looking southeast from Center Avenue towards the adjacent SCE towers

Source: PBS&J, 2007.



FIGURE 4.1-7  
**Viewpoints 11 and 12**

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The Ripcurl

### **View Point 8**

This viewpoint consists of views southeast across the northern portion of the project site, looking from the eastern edge of Golden West College. The intersection of Center Avenue and Gothard Street dominates the foreground. Also prominent in the foreground is the landscaping which consists of several tall and mature trees about 30 feet in height, ornamental bushes and a well maintained lawn. Mid-range views consist of existing commercial structures on the project site. Again, the presence of red-tile roofs on each structure is suggestive of the Spanish influence style of architecture. Background views also include expanses of open sky, although these expanses are interrupted by the trees located on the edge of the project site.

### **View Point 9**

This viewpoint consists of views east across the southern portion of the project site, looking from the eastern edge of Golden West College. Gothard Street dominates the foreground. Also prominent in the foreground are commercial signage and landscaping, which consists of several tall and mature trees about 20 feet in height, ornamental bushes, large rocks, and a well maintained lawn. Mid-range views consist of existing commercial structures and a parking lot on the project site. Background views also include expanses of open sky, although these expanses are interrupted by the trees located on the edge of the project site.

### **View Point 10**

This viewpoint consists of views southwest across the northern portion of the project site, looking from the eastern edge of the project site. The two-story office building and rear parking lot dominate the foreground. Also visible are trees and ornamental bushes that are common throughout the interior of the project site. Mid-range views consist of landscaping located along Gothard Street to the west. Background views also include expanses of open sky, although these expanses are interrupted by commercial structures located on the project site.

### **View Point 11**

This view shows the adjacent SCE towers as seen from the northeastern boundary of the project site. The two towers present a visually dominating feature in the immediate vicinity due to their height. The actual site of the towers is blocked from view of the proposed project site due to an existing 6-foot tall masonry wall; only the towers are visible.

### **View Point 12**

Viewpoint 12 illustrates the ground-level view of the adjacent SCE towers, as shown from Center Avenue. In addition to the two towers, minor accessory structures can be seen on the site such as fencing, a dumpster, and various maintenance sheds, as well as associated vehicles. The site is barren with no landscaping aside from one tree at the southern edge of the site.

### *Light and Glare*

The site and the surrounding area currently have average ambient nighttime light levels for an urbanized area. Artificial light sources found on site and in the surrounding area include security lights associated with buildings and parking lots, light emanating from building interiors, illuminated signs, streetlights and automobile headlights.

Glare generation within the project vicinity is limited. Surrounding development consists predominately of low-rise buildings that generally lack large expanses of glass or other reflective materials. In addition, the presence of small surface parking lots on the Goldenwest Transportation Center to the north and the Golden West College to the west does not represent the potential for glare conditions reflected off vehicle windows and surfaces during daytime and nighttime hours.

### *Shade and Shadow*

Four one-story retail buildings and one two-story office building are currently located on the project site. These buildings presently create limited shade and shadow patterns that are contained within the project site. Land uses surrounding the site are also low-rise in nature also and presently create limited shade and shadow patterns. No shadow-sensitive uses are located within close proximity of the proposed Project site.

## **4.1.2 Regulatory Framework**

### **■ Federal**

There are no federal regulations related to aesthetics that apply to the proposed project.

### **■ State**

The State of California Department of Transportation designates scenic highway corridors. The project site is not visible from any existing designated (or eligible) scenic highways. The nearest eligible scenic highway is the Pacific Coast Highway, located approximately four miles west of the site.

### **■ Regional**

The County of Orange General Plan Land Use Element (2005) contains a Scenic Highway Plan. However, the project site is not located within any designated Landscape or Viewscape Corridor within this General Plan. The nearest designated Viewscape Corridor is the Pacific Coast Highway, located approximately four miles west of the site.

## ■ Local

The City of Huntington Beach addresses aesthetic considerations for development in the City in various City documents. Specifically, the City of Huntington Beach General Plan contains policies relevant to the visual quality and character of the proposed project.

### *Urban Design Element*

- Goal UD 1** Enhance the visual image of the City of Huntington Beach.
- Objective UD 1.3** Strengthen the visual character of the City’s street hierarchy (i.e., major, primary, etc.) in order to clarify the City’s structure and improve Citywide identity.
- Policy UD 1.3.1** Require a consistent design theme and/or landscape design character along the community’s corridors that reflects the unique qualities of each district. Ensure that streetscape standards for the major commercial corridors, the residential corridors, and primary and secondary image corridors provide each corridor with its own identity while promoting visual continuity throughout the City.

### Consistency Analysis

The proposed project is located less than ¼ mile from Edinger Avenue, which is designated as a “Primary Path/Image Corridor” within the Urban Design Element. The intersection of Gothard Street and Edinger Avenue is located approximately 400 feet south of the project site. The area surrounding this intersection generally consists of commercial/retail-oriented uses. A large “Big Box” furniture store is located on the northeast corner of the intersection while multi-tenant, low-rise commercial centers are located on the other corners. As discussed in the Urban Design Element, the Edinger Commercial Corridor is characterized by larger retail centers than those typically found along Beach Boulevard to the southeast. However, the multi-tenant and larger uses have little physical or visual connection. As a consequence, the corridor lacks overall identity and strong physical anchors. This is true in the vicinity of Edinger Avenue and Gothard Street. While the northwest and northeast corners both contain furniture-related retail establishments, a restaurant and oil service facility are intermixed with these uses.

The project would incorporate design guidelines that would adhere to City standards (including streetscape standards) and include substantial landscaping to soften the hardscape. The inclusion of landscaping would encourage similar landscape designs along Edinger Avenue, thus helping to establish an overall identity to the corridor. The proposed project would therefore meet the intent of this policy, and not conflict with the policies identified in the Urban Design Element of the General Plan.

## *Circulation Element*

**Goal CE 7** Maintain and enhance the visual quality and scenic views along designated corridors.

**Objective CE 7.1** Enhance existing view corridors along scenic corridors and identify opportunities for the designation of new view corridors.

**Policy CE 7.1.4** Establish landscape and urban streetscape design themes for landscape corridors, minor scenic urban corridors, and major urban scenic corridors which create a different character enhancing the corridor's surrounding land uses. For example, the design theme for corridors adjacent to residential neighborhoods should be different than the design theme for industrial or commercial uses.

## Consistency Analysis

Edinger Avenue is a designated “Minor Urban Scenic Corridor” within the vicinity of the project site (from Newland Street to Saybrook Street). The project would include substantial landscaping to soften the hardscape along the street edge. The inclusion of landscaping would encourage similar landscape designs along Edinger Avenue, thus helping to enhance the visual quality along the corridor. The proposed project would therefore meet the intent of this policy, and not conflict with the policies identified in the Circulation Element of the General Plan.

## 4.1.3 Project Impacts and Mitigation

### ■ Analytic Method

A qualitative assessment of visual impacts was prepared by evaluating the existing visual setting and comparing it to visual conditions assumed to occur under the proposed project. The project site and surrounding uses were observed, and photographs were taken to determine the short- and long-term visual effects of the proposed project. Policies from the City's General Plan and applicable zoning ordinances were identified to determine if the project design was consistent with these adopted plans.

### ■ Thresholds of Significance

The following thresholds of significance are based on Appendix G to the 2008 CEQA Guidelines. For purposes of this EIR, implementation of the proposed project may have a significant adverse impact if it would do any of the following:

- Have a substantial effect on a scenic vista

- 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 light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area

## ■ Effects Not Found to Be Significant

Threshold	Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
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Scenic vistas in the City of Huntington Beach are primarily located along the coast. As the project site is located approximately 4 miles from the ocean, no views of the coast from the site currently exist. The proposed project is located in a highly urbanized area, which is not considered a scenic vista. The height of the proposed building (approximately 60 to 66 feet) is compatible with the existing buildings that are located in the immediate vicinity. Therefore, development of the project site would not adversely affect a scenic vista. No impact would occur, and no further analysis of this issue is required in the EIR.

Threshold	Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?
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The State of California Department of Transportation designates scenic highway corridors. The project site is not within a state scenic highway; nor is the project site visible from any (officially designated or eligible) scenic highway. In addition, as the project site is presently developed, the site does not contain rock outcroppings or historic buildings.

The project site does contain fifty-one mature trees that would be removed during construction of the proposed project. However, these trees are ornamental and will be replaced two for one with 36-inch box trees or the palm equivalent. No impact would occur, and no further analysis of this issue is required in the EIR.

## ■ Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold	Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?
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**Impact 4.1-1**                    **Implementation of the proposed project would not degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. This impact is considered *less than significant*.**

For the purposes of this analysis, a substantial degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the site would occur if the project introduces a new visible element that would be inconsistent with the overall quality, scale, and character of the surrounding development. The analysis considers the degree of

contrast between proposed features and existing features that represent the area's valued aesthetic image, in addition to the degree to which the project would contribute to the area's aesthetic value.

The Ripcurl project would implement a high-quality, mixed-use development in an area of the City that is currently undergoing revitalization. A Specific Plan for the Beach-Edinger Corridor is simultaneously underway, which is intended to present a clear and comprehensive vision for growth and change along Beach Boulevard and Edinger Avenue. The area north of Warner Avenue along Beach Boulevard, and including the Edinger segment, is generally planned for more intensive mixed-use development. In particular, this northern segment is intended to act as a Town Center, or hub, providing a destination and live/work center for the City, with primarily retail and residential development. Although the Corridor Study is still in the early planning stages, The Ripcurl project has taken into account the intended vision of the area in order to present a project that would fit into the overall visual scheme of anticipated development.

Presently, the catalyst for revitalization in the project vicinity is the Bella Terra Mall, which is located adjacent to the project site to the east. Phase II of the Bella Terra Mall (commonly referred to as The Village at Bella Terra) is also simultaneously being evaluated in a separate EIR, and is located immediately east/southeast of the project site, west of the existing Bella Terra Mall. The Village at Bella Terra is presently undergoing environmental review for a GPA/ZTA to permit mixed-use residential and commercial development with allowable heights up to ten stories. Consequently, The Ripcurl project in conjunction with The Village at Bella Terra represents a significant portion of the visual changes that could occur in the nearby vicinity.

Currently, The Ripcurl project site is developed with a low-scale commercial and office shopping center and associated surface parking with buildings ranging from approximately 25 to 40 feet in height. Development of the proposed project would convert the existing one- and two-story commercial shopping center to a six-story mixed-use residential and commercial development. The introduction of mid-rise structures that could reach heights of 60 to 66 feet would represent a change in the visual character of the project site.

As discussed in Chapter 3.0 (Project Description) of the EIR, the conceptual project plans may be modified prior to final building plans and specifications in response to conditions of approval, mitigation measures, and design changes in response to code requirements. Notwithstanding that some plan changes may occur, Figure 3-5 through Figure 3-7 (Conceptual Building Elevations) illustrate the conceptual architectural design of the proposed project. Proposed features could incorporate a portland cement plaster exterior finish, vinyl window and door systems, and metal trellises and guardrails on the balconies. Proposed landscaping features could include palm trees with plantings along the street and plantings on the roof and balconies, while the proposed streetscape features could include colored pavement, round cement bollards and streetlights. Landscaping on the roof and balconies would be visible from surrounding areas and the street. All project parking would be located within the buildings and screened from public view.

In addition to the visual changes that would occur directly on the project site, adjacent views would also be affected. Directly adjacent to the project site to the east and southeast, the existing vacant commercial

building formerly associated with Montgomery Ward is approximately 30 feet in height. In addition, the existing vacant commercial building formerly associated with the Levitz Furniture Store to the south is approximately 30 feet in height, with a sign approximately 60 feet in height. The new six-story structures would represent a change in the existing visual character of the project site, which would alter the existing views from the adjacent uses. The proposed structures would be approximately twice the size in height of the existing vacant commercial buildings that surround the site. The visual result of the proposed development would be an overall increase in building height and mass because the proposed structures would be located closer to the existing sidewalks along Center Avenue and Gothard Street compared to the existing on-site structures.

The nearest uses to the project site from Old World Village consist of a surface parking lot. In addition, existing uses to the north and west of the project site include surface parking for the Transportation Center and Golden West College, respectively. Consequently, the views from the surrounding parking areas onto the project site would change from low-scale commercial development to a more visually intensive and larger-scale use.

Implementation of the proposed project would represent a substantial change in the visual character of the immediate vicinity; however, the proposed project would not substantially degrade the existing character or quality of the site or surrounding uses. The existing strip mall on the project site does not include any significant aesthetic or visual characteristics that are unique to the area or the City. Therefore, the replacement of such uses with new development, which would be built according to the City's design standards, would not represent a decline in aesthetic value of the site.

Although the proposed project would represent substantially more intensive land uses than those currently existing, implementation of the proposed project would further establish physical and visual continuity in the project area in relation to adjacent development. More specifically, the existing Bella Terra Mall to the east currently has structures that range in height from approximately 33 to 90 feet with tower elements rising to approximately 104 feet. The varying building heights throughout the site provide variety to the roofline. Development of The Ripcurl project would be similar to the aesthetic qualities that are present within the Bella Terra Mall, in that proposed features would be designed to improve the overall visual quality of the area compared to current conditions. The Ripcurl project would also diminish the dominance of surface parking lots and encourage pedestrian activity. Though the height of the proposed structures would be greater than those existing today on the project site, the architecture would be designed to complement, and be compatible with, existing and proposed uses in the surrounding area.

In addition, because there are no adjacent sensitive receptors or uses that depend on sunlight for function, physical comfort, or commerce (i.e., parks, nurseries, etc.), the increase in building height would not represent an adverse effect on shade and/or shadow impacts. The commercial and residential development, landscaping, and associated pedestrian and vehicular circulation of the proposed project would enhance the aesthetic fabric of the project site and surrounding area.

In conclusion, implementation of the proposed project would change the existing visual character and/or quality of the site. However, the visual changes that would result from future development would not significantly degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site or its surroundings. In addition,

although direct comparisons cannot be made because the Corridor Study is still in the early planning stages, implementation of the proposed project would be visually consistent with the overall theme of the Corridor Study for more intensive mixed-use development with primarily retail and residential development in the general project area. Design review for compliance with the City’s development standards would help reduce any visual incompatibilities that could otherwise occur with new development. Therefore, this impact would be considered *less than significant*.

Threshold	Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?
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**Impact 4.1-2      Implementation of the proposed project would not degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. This impact is considered *less than significant*.**

For the purposes of this analysis, light or glare effects evaluate the change in illumination level as a result of project sources and the extent to which project lighting would spill off the project site and affect adjacent light-sensitive areas.

***Light***

Project implementation would increase overall nighttime lighting in the project area with the introduction of additional street lighting, exterior lighting, and vehicle headlights. Surrounding land uses immediately adjacent to the project site are commercial and public in nature. The closest sensitive receptors that could be affected by nighttime lighting include residents located in the Old World Village, located approximately 700 feet northeast of the project site.

Night illumination can affect people in several ways. For example, where intense lighting is viewed against a dark background, the contrast attracts the attention of the viewer and could be considered annoying. Under low-light conditions, the human eye adjusts to the brightest light within the field of view. If the range of light intensity to which the eye is exposed is large, the eye will be relatively insensitive to the more dimly lighted areas within the field of view. In addition, increased illumination can affect the suitability of sleeping areas, use of outdoor areas at natural light levels, and privacy. The degree of impacts may be related to the degree of change from the illumination levels to which people have become accustomed.

Due to the urbanized nature of the surrounding area, a significant amount of ambient nighttime light currently exists, reducing the views of stars and affecting views of the nighttime sky. Streetlights provide the majority of light along the streets that surround the project site. Surrounding uses also provide exterior lighting. The proposed project would introduce nighttime lighting directly onto the project site, as well as into the project vicinity. Consequently, the surrounding uses could be exposed to exterior lighting associated with the proposed buildings. However, as a standard condition of approval, the City requires that all outdoor lighting be directed to prevent light spillage onto adjacent properties, with indication of such provision on the final site plans. Additionally, some of this light would be masked by existing street lighting and nighttime vehicular traffic. Finally, given the distance and intervening

development between the project site and the residences of Old World Village, nighttime lighting is not expected to negatively affect the closest sensitive receptors.

Although one does not currently exist, a commuter rail line could be added to the Union Pacific Railroad in the future. Therefore, if existing trains or potential commuter trains were to operate at night, it is possible that train lights could affect the proposed residences during nighttime hours. However, the commercial uses would be located on the ground floor while residential uses would be located above. The lights from trains operating at night would, therefore, not be expected to impact the residential units because the train tracks are not elevated. Therefore, light impacts would be *less than significant*.

### **Glare**

Proposed structures would range between 60 to 66 feet in height. Buildings generally three or more stories in height have the potential to include large building faces that could introduce reflective surfaces (e.g., brightly colored building façades, reflective glass) that could increase existing levels of daytime glare. The proposed project could, therefore, serve as a new source of light and glare in the area, and impacts would be potentially significant. Implementation of mitigation measure **MM4.1-1** would be required.

**MM4.1-1** *To the extent feasible, the Applicant shall use non-reflective façade treatments, such as matte paint or glass coatings. Prior to issuance of building permits for the proposed project, the Applicant shall indicate provision of these materials on the building plans.*

The provision of non-reflective façade treatments for structures proposed under the project would ensure that impacts related to daytime glare would be reduced to a less-than-significant level by reducing the reflective properties of the building materials employed, such as glass, metal, or finished concrete.

Glare from headlights entering and exiting the site from Center Avenue and Gothard Street would be momentarily visible to uses across each roadway. However, no light sensitive uses are located directly adjacent to the project site that would be affected by vehicle headlights exiting the development. Therefore, impacts from glare would be *less than significant*.

## **4.1.4 Cumulative Impacts**

The geographic context for the analysis of cumulative aesthetic impacts includes areas with views of the proposed project site. The analysis accounts for all anticipated cumulative growth within this geographic area, as represented in Table 3-4 (Cumulative Projects) in Chapter 3 (Project Description).

Because the City is an urban, developed area, it is anticipated that any future projects (including The Village at Bella Terra, which is located east of the project site) would generally be consistent with the City's design standards. Design review would consider the types and placement of planned development throughout the City. Consequently, changes in land use that would substantially degrade the area would generally not be permitted to occur, thereby protecting and enhancing the visual character of these areas. Additional development within the surrounding areas would constitute further intensification of an already suburban and nearly built-out area and would generally occur through redevelopment; therefore,

it would not be expected to result in substantial degradation of the visual quality of the area. Consequently, cumulative impacts would be anticipated to be less than significant. Moreover, the contribution of the proposed project to such cumulative impacts would not be cumulative considerable, because, as described above, the proposed project would not have a substantial adverse effect on the visual character or quality of the project area. Therefore, the proposed project's contribution would not be cumulatively considerable, and the cumulative impact of the project would be *less than significant*.

Huntington Beach is an urbanized City and contains numerous existing sources of nighttime lighting. Cumulative development would constitute further intensification of an already urban and nearly built-out area and would generally occur through redevelopment or infill development. Although cumulative new development or redevelopment could include direct illumination of project structures, features, and/or walkways, the increase in ambient nighttime lighting levels in these areas would only rise minimally because a significant amount of ambient lighting currently exists due to the urbanized nature of the City as a whole. Thus, increases in nighttime lighting that would occur under cumulative development would not significantly affect nighttime views of the sky because such views are already limited. Because nighttime views of the sky are already limited due to the urbanized nature of the City, cumulative development, in combination with development under the proposed project, is not anticipated to result in the creation of new sources of light that could negatively affect nighttime views. Therefore, cumulative impacts associated with ambient nighttime lighting would be considered *less than significant*.

The cumulative context for spillover light would be other development that could add to the spillover light effects of the project on properties in the adjacent residential neighborhoods. Spillover light is a site-specific effect that could only be added to by other projects in the immediate vicinity of the affected property. Implementation of the proposed project in combination with future development that could be permitted under The Village at Bella Terra project, which is proposed to the east/southeast, would add lighting typical of mixed-use residential and commercial developments. This includes directed lighting for architectural accents, signage, landscape elements, and security lighting. Because there are no immediately adjacent residential uses or other light-sensitive uses (the nearest are approximately 700 feet to the northeast), implementation of the proposed project in combination with The Village at Bella Terra project represent the cumulative potential for spillover lighting in the area because both projects would contain residential uses. Future residents from both projects would make a conscious decision to live in an area that could include increased lighting due to the mixed uses proposed. Therefore, there would be *less than significant* cumulative impacts associated with spillover lighting.

Cumulative development could result in some increase in glare, as specific building materials and configurations are uncertain. However, these potential increases are likely to be minor and consistent with the existing built environment due to limited development potential and existing City regulations. Further, future projects would, in many cases, be subject to CEQA review and would require mitigation for these effects, which would likely also reduce the impacts to a less-than-significant level. Consequently, cumulative glare within the surrounding area would be less than significant. As implementation of the proposed project would not, after mitigation, result in a significant daytime glare impact, the proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to this impact.

Therefore, cumulative impacts associated with glare would not be cumulatively considerable and would be *less than significant*.

#### 4.1.5 References

Huntington Beach, City of. 1996. *City of Huntington Beach General Plan*, 13 May.