

## IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

### A. AESTHETICS

This section addresses the potential impacts to views and aesthetics as a result of the proposed Project at the Project Site and the development scenarios analyzed for the Add Area. There are no residential properties located adjacent to or within a close enough distance that could be affected by the shade/shadow or increased amounts of exterior lighting resulting from development at the Project Site or Add Area.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The impacts examined herein take into account two attributes of aesthetic values:

- *Visual Character of Views:* Includes natural and human-made patterns, mass, architectural design, and color.
- *Viewshed:* The content and range of view.

The viewshed is defined in terms of the following:

- *Foreground Views:* Zero to approximately 2,000 feet from the viewpoint.
- *Middleground Views:* Approximately 2,000 feet to two miles from the viewpoint.
- *Background Views:* Beyond two miles from the viewpoint.

This analysis is based on the relative visibility of the Site from viewing locations and how the Site affects the rest of the viewshed from this distance. Due to the developed, urban nature of the project area, small obstructions will not restrict views of or from the Project Site. However, structures taller than the existing one- to three-story buildings may have the potential to affect views in the area over time.

All views along east-west trending roadways will be described from the west to the east. All views along north-south trending roadways will be described from north to south.

#### Project Site

##### *General Project Site Viewshed*

The project area is located within a developed, urban area. Generally, land uses in the project area are commercial and industrial. To the north of the Project Site, views include one- and two-

story office and industrial buildings within the Add Area. In the distance to the north, sporadic views of the Santa Susana and San Gabriel Mountains are visible between existing buildings. To the west across Corbin Avenue, views currently include primarily one- to three-story office and retail buildings. These include the Great Western Bank complex, an insurance office building, and a Black Angus restaurant. In the distance, views include one eight-story office building and the Santa Susana Mountains. To the south, across Nordhoff Street, views are of one-story retail buildings such as a Burger King, Arby's Restaurant, Abe's Deli, a car dealership, and strip malls consisting of small, individual retail uses. In the distance, the tops of the Santa Monica Mountains are visible sporadically between the existing buildings south of the Project Site. To the east, across Shirley Avenue, views include the two- and three-story Northridge Fashion Center and associated parking. Views other than the immediately adjacent properties are not available to the east.

### ***General Project Site Visual Character***

There are few distinct visual qualities about the Project Site and adjacent properties due to the developed, urban visual character of the Project Site and adjacent properties. There are no natural geographic features readily visible immediately surrounding the Project Site.

The Project Site is currently developed with a one- and two-story office building used for research and development consisting of approximately 310,000 square feet. The remaining portions of the Project Site include a surface parking lot utilized by facility employees, a surface parking lot utilized by visitors to the facility, a vacant parcel located at the southeast corner of Corbin Avenue and Prairie Street, and a small stand of trees located at the northeast corner of Corbin Avenue and Nordhoff Street.

The area immediately surrounding the Project Site is developed with a mix of commercial, industrial, and retail uses. There are no undeveloped properties or open spaces adjacent to the Project Site and therefore, few, if any, distinct natural qualities are available to view in the immediate area of the Project. Although there is little undeveloped land in the immediate area, three mountain ranges provide the distant visual backdrop for development in the area. These ranges are the Santa Susana Mountains to the north and west, the San Gabriel Mountains to the east, and the Santa Monica Mountains to the south.

The visual character of the project area is urban, including a mix of commercial, and industrial. Major streets in the area are typically five to six lanes wide, making single passenger vehicles the primary mode of transportation in the area. Vegetation is limited to street trees and landscaping buffers associated with existing development.

## *Views*

For analysis purposes, the Project Site viewshed has been separated into four primary views, (1) looking west from Shirley Avenue, (2) looking north from the Project Site and Nordhoff Street, (3) looking south from the Project Site and Prairie Street, and (4) looking west from Corbin Avenue.

### *1. Looking Westward from Shirley Avenue*

As shown in **Figure 6: Views from Shirley Avenue**, foreground views from this location are of the Project Site. Specifically, views include a surface parking lot, a vacant parcel approximately eight acres in size, a one- and two-story office building, one-story accessory and storage buildings, and another yet, smaller surface parking. A six-foot-tall, see-through chain link fence extends southward from Prairie Street to Teledyne Way. Trees line this fence from Prairie Street to Teledyne Way inside the property line. Southward from Teledyne Way, an approximately six-foot-tall, shrouded chain link fence extends toward Nordhoff Street. The fence ends approximately three hundred feet north of Nordhoff Street at which point the visitor parking lot becomes visible. Beyond the Project Site to the west, foreground views include one- to three-story office buildings and various restaurants.

Middleground views from this vantage point include one approximately eight-story office building. Due to the typically low-rise development pattern of the project area, middleground views from this location are not visible. Background views from this location include the tops of the Santa Susana Mountains.

### *2. Looking Northward from Nordhoff Street*

As shown in **Figure 7: Views from Nordhoff Street**, foreground views from this location include the Project Site. Looking northward from Nordhoff Street views include a small stand of trees located at the northeast corner of Nordhoff Street and Corbin Avenue, the main, one- and two-story office building at the Project Site, landscaping associated with the main building, and a surface parking lot for visitors.

There are no middle ground views from this location. Background views are very sporadic but include the tops of the Santa Susana Mountains to the north visible between existing buildings.

### *3. Looking Southward from Prairie Street*

As shown in **Figure 8: Views from Prairie Street**, foreground views from this location are primarily of the Project Site. Looking southward from Prairie Street views include a vacant parcel of land, the main, one- and two-story office building, accessory and storage buildings, and a surface parking lot for employees. A six-foot-tall chain link fence extends along the south side

**Figure 6: Views from Shirley Avenue**

**Figure 7: Views from Nordhoff Street**

**Figure 8: Views from Prairie Street**

of Prairie Street from Corbin Avenue to Shirley Avenue. Trees are planted along this fence line extending westward from Shirley Avenue westward approximately three hundred feet. To the southwest, foreground views include one- to three-story office buildings located along the west side of Corbin Avenue. To the southeast, foreground views include the two- and three-story Northridge Fashion Center.

Due to the primarily low-rise development of the project area, there are no middleground views from this vantage point. Background views are sporadic but include the tops of the Santa Monica Mountains in the distance between existing buildings.

#### ***4. Looking Eastward from Corbin Avenue***

As shown in **Figure 9: Views from Corbin Avenue**, foreground views from this location primarily include the Project Site. Specifically, views include a vacant parcel of land, one-story buildings within the Add Area, a surface parking lot, the Northridge Fashion Center, and the main, one- and two-story building at the Project Site. A six-foot-tall chain link fence extends southward from Prairie Street to Nordhoff Street along the property line.

Due to the two- and three-story height and the massing of the Northridge Fashion Center, there are no middleground or background views from this vantage point.

#### ***Visual Character***

For analysis purposes, the Project Site viewshed has been separated into four primary segments, (1) looking west from Shirley Avenue, (2) looking north from the Project Site and Nordhoff Street, (3) looking south from the Project Site and Prairie Street, and (4) looking west from Corbin Avenue.

##### ***1. Looking Westward from Shirley Avenue***

The existing industrial/office land use at the Project Site; Corbin Avenue, a six-lane, secondary highway; and office complexes west of Corbin Avenue result in a visual character of a developed, major commercial corridor.

##### ***2. Looking Northward from Nordhoff Street***

The existing office complexes west of Corbin Avenue, industrial/office building on the Project Site, and the Northridge Fashion Center from this vantage point creates a visual character of a developed, commercial area. Vegetation from this vantage point is limited to landscaping buffers located on currently developed properties.

**Figure 9: Views from Corbin Avenue**

### **3. *Looking Southward from Prairie Street***

The existing industrial/office building, surface parking lot, and vacant lot located on the Project Site create a visual character of a previously developed commercial area. There is little vegetation visible from this vantage point.

### **4. *Looking Eastward from Corbin Avenue***

The existing industrial/office buildings, vacant parcel, and surface parking lot on the Project Site; Corbin Avenue, a six-lane, secondary highway; the existing industrial/office buildings within the Add Area facing Corbin Avenue; and the existing commercial corridor along Nordhoff Street result in a visual character of a major urban, developed commercial corridor.

## **Add Area**

### ***General Viewshed***

The Add Area is located in the northwestern portion of the San Fernando Valley. The Add Area is rectangular in shape, approximately fifteen acres in size, and bounded by retail properties that front Plummer Street to the north, Corbin Avenue to the west, Prairie Street to the south, and Shirley Avenue to the east. The Add Area is located within a developed, urban area. Land uses in the project area are typically commercial and industrial.

To the north, views are of one- to three-story retail buildings that front Plummer Street. In the distance, views to the north include sporadic glimpses of the Santa Susana and San Gabriel Mountains between existing buildings. To the west across Corbin Avenue, views currently include primarily one- to three-story office and retail buildings. These are the Great Western Bank complex and an insurance office building. In the far distance, views include one eight-story office building and the Santa Susana Mountains. To the south across Prairie Street, views are of a one- and two-story industrial building, accessory buildings for the industrial facility, a surface parking lot, and an eight-acre vacant parcel of land at the southeastern corner of the intersection of Corbin Avenue and Prairie Street. In the distance to the south, sporadic views of the tops of the Santa Monica Mountains are visible between existing buildings south of the Project Site. To the east, across Shirley Avenue, views include the two- and three-story Northridge Fashion Center and associated parking. Views other than the immediately adjacent properties are not available to the east.

### ***General Visual Character***

There are few distinct visual qualities about the Add Area and adjacent properties due to the developed, urban visual character of the area. There are no natural geographic features immediately surrounding the Add Area due to the developed, urban nature of the area.

The Add Area is currently developed with approximately 98,000 square feet of public storage, approximately 42,000 square feet of industrial space, approximately 30,000 square feet of warehouse space, approximately 83,000 square feet of manufacturing space, and approximately 27,000 square feet of office space.

The area immediately surrounding the Add Area is developed with a mix of commercial, industrial, and retail uses. There are no undeveloped properties or open spaces adjacent to the Add Area and therefore, few, if any, distinct natural qualities exist in the immediate area. Although there is little undeveloped land in the immediate area, three mountain ranges provide the visual backdrop for development. These ranges are the Santa Susana Mountains to the north and west, the San Gabriel Mountains to the east, and the Santa Monica Mountains to the south.

The visual character of the project area is urban, including a mix of commercial, industrial, and retail development. Major streets in the area are typically five to six lanes wide, making single passenger vehicles the primary mode of transportation in the area. Vegetation is limited to street trees and landscaping buffers associated with existing development.

### ***Views***

For analysis purposes, the Add Area viewshed has been separated into five primary views, (1) looking west from Shirley Avenue; (2) looking north from Nordhoff Street, (3) looking north from Prairie Street, (4) looking south from the commercial properties north of the Add Area that front Plummer Street, and (5) looking east from Corbin Avenue.

#### ***1. Looking Westward from Shirley Avenue***

As shown in **Figure 10: Views of Add Area I**, foreground views from this location are of the Add Area and commercial properties located to the north of the Add Area. Specifically, views include one- to three-story retail buildings located just to the north of the Add Area including Gelson's supermarket, DSW shoe warehouse, Linens 'n' Things, Starbucks, and other retail stores. Further south, views include a two-story public storage facility and the Northridge Tennis Club, a tennis and indoor soccer facility. However, the Northridge Tennis Club is screened by concentrated tree plantings along Shirley Avenue.

Due to the height of existing buildings along Shirley Avenue, there are no middleground views from this vantage point. Background views are sporadic but include glimpses of the Santa Susana Mountains between existing buildings.

#### ***2. Looking Northward from Nordhoff Street***

Due to the size of the main office building located on the Project Site, views of the Add Area are not visible from Nordhoff Street.

**Figure 10: Views of Add Area I**

### **3. *Looking Northward from Prairie Street***

As shown in **Figure 11: Views of Add Area II**, foreground views from this location include the Add Area properties. Specifically, foreground views include one- and two-story office and industrial buildings. Approximately half the distance between Corbin Avenue and Shirley Avenue, foreground views include Melvin Avenue, a north-south trending cul-de-sac that provides access to some of the Add Area properties.

Due to the proximity of the Add Area buildings to this vantage point and the generally low-rise development of the project area, there are no middleground views from this location. Background views are sporadic but include the tops of the Santa Susana Mountains in the distance between existing buildings within the Add Area.

### **4. *Looking Southward from Plummer Street***

Foreground views from this location include a KMart shopping center (southeast corner of Plummer Street and Corbin Avenue), a large surface parking lot associated with the KMart shopping center, one-story buildings located within the Add Area to the south of this parking lot, and a two- and three-story Gelson's shopping center (southwest corner of Plummer Street and Shirley Avenue).

Due to the height and massing of the existing shopping center, middleground and background views are not available from this location. Further east, near the intersection of Corbin Avenue and Plummer Street, building heights are primarily one story. Due to the existing low-rise development of the project area, middleground views are not available from this location either. Background views are sporadic but include glimpses of the Santa Monica Mountains to the south.

### **5. *Looking Eastward from Corbin Avenue***

Foreground views from this vantage point include primarily one-story office and industrial buildings associated with the Add Area properties. Additionally, views include a one-story KMart shopping center, one- and two-story buildings located on the Project Site, and glimpses of the two- and three-story Northridge Fashion Center.

Due to the primarily low-rise development of the project area, middleground and background views are not available from this location.

**Figure 11: Views of Add Area II**

### ***Visual Character***

For analysis purposes, the Add Area viewshed has been separated into five primary segments, (1) looking west from Shirley Avenue; (2) looking north from Nordhoff Street, (3) looking north from Prairie Street, (4) looking south from the commercial properties north of the Add Area that front Plummer Street, and (5) looking east from Corbin Avenue.

#### ***1. Looking Westward from Shirley Avenue***

The existing industrial/office land use at the Project Site; Corbin Avenue, a six-lane, secondary highway; and office complexes west of Corbin Avenue create a visual character from this view of a developed, major commercial corridor.

#### ***2. Looking Northward from Nordhoff Street***

The existing office complexes west of Corbin Avenue, industrial/office building on the Project Site, and the Northridge Fashion Center creates a visual character of a developed, commercial area. Vegetation from this vantage point is limited to landscaping buffers located on currently developed properties.

#### ***3. Looking Northward from Prairie Street***

From this vantage point, the Add Area properties are developed with one and two story buildings which results in a visual character of an office/industrial park. Further, there is little vegetation on the Add Area properties which emphasizes the developed, industrial character.

#### ***4. Looking Southward from Plummer Street***

The existing one- to three-story retail shopping centers, a large surface parking lot, and the Northridge Fashion Center create a visual character of a major commercial, shopping district.

#### ***5. Looking Eastward from Corbin Avenue***

The existing industrial/office buildings, vacant parcel, and surface parking lot on the Project Site; Corbin Avenue, a six-lane, secondary highway; the existing industrial/office buildings within the Add Area facing Corbin Avenue; and the existing commercial corridor along Nordhoff Street result in a visual character of a major urban, developed commercial corridor.

## THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

According to the City of Los Angeles CEQA Thresholds Guide, the determination of significance shall be made on a case-by-case basis, considering the following factors:

- The amount or relative proportion of existing features or elements that substantially contribute to the valued visual character or image of a neighborhood, community, or localized area, which would be removed, altered, or demolished;
- The amount of natural open space to be graded or developed;
- The degree to which proposed structures in natural open space areas would be effectively integrated into the aesthetics of the Site, through appropriate design, etc.;
- The degree of contrast between proposed features and existing features that represent the area's valued aesthetic image;
- The degree to which a proposed zone change would result in buildings that would detract from the existing style or image of the area due to density, height, bulk, setbacks, signage, or other physical elements;
- The degree to which the project would contribute to the area's aesthetic value;
- The nature and quality of recognized or valued views (such as natural topography, settings, man-made or natural features of visual interest, and resources such as mountains or the ocean);
- Whether the project affects views from a designated scenic highway, corridor, or parkway;
- The extent of obstruction (e.g. total blockage, partial interruption, or minor diminishment);
- The extent to which the project affects recognized views available from a length of a public roadway, bike path, or trail, as opposed to a single, fixed vantage point; and
- Applicable guidelines and regulations.

Due to the developed nature of the Project Site and Add Area and the western San Fernando Valley, there is little natural open space available. On the Project Site and Add Area, there is currently no natural open space. Therefore, no significant impacts will result from any of the possible development scenarios as a result of the second and third thresholds above that refer to natural open space.

The Chatsworth - Porter Ranch Community Plan does not recognize any views within the Plan Area. Further, there are no recognized or valued views at or adjacent to the Project Site and Add Area. There are no designated scenic highways, corridors, or parkways near the Project Site or Add Area. Therefore, no significant impacts will result from any of the possible development scenarios as a result of thresholds eight, nine, and eleven that refer to recognized or valued views.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

Due to the fact that a specific development scenario has not yet been determined for the Project Site and Add Area, the Environmental Impact for the Aesthetics section will be based on a worst-case scenario analysis that will apply to each of the four potential development scenarios.

Due to the developed nature of the project area, including the Project Site and Add Area, and lack of significant views in the area, impacts are similar for each of the identified views. Therefore, the following impact analysis applies to each of the development scenarios proposed for the Project Site and Add Area.

#### **Project Site**

Current views looking westward from Shirley Avenue include the foreground, middleground, and background; looking northward from Nordhoff Street include the foreground and very limited portions of the background; looking southward from Prairie Street include the foreground and background; and looking eastward from Corbin Avenue include the foreground.

Due to the existing low rise development on the southern portion of the Project Site and the vacancy of the northern portion of the Project Site, development of six stories or 75 feet in height could result in a significant impact on foreground, some middleground, and background views from and into the Project Site. However, current views in the area include existing industrial and office developments that are not considered significant by the Community Plan. Far background views of the Santa Susana Mountains that are not identified by the Plan as significant but might be considered desirable by the community are sporadic and located at such a distance from the Project Site that the proposed development would not result in a significant impact to these background views. Therefore, the proposed development at the Project Site will result in a less than significant impact on views due to incompatibility with the Community Plan.

The proposed zoning for the Project Site is C2-1. This zoning designation allows for unlimited height and an FAR of 1.5: 1. The existing zone designation allows for unlimited height. Buildings on properties adjacent to the Project Site are two and three-stories in height. However, buildings of six, eight and ten stories are located in the nearby project area within the viewshed. Therefore, proposed development of six stories or 75 feet would not exceed allowable height or zoning regulations and will result in a less than significant impact to views due to incompatibility with zoning regulations.

The project area is currently characterized as a major commercial corridor. The Project would result in continuity with the current commercial nature of the project area. This would not eliminate any natural feature in the area. Further, the Project proposes to continue an existing use and will not result in the insertion of a prominent feature that would change the existing visual character of the area. Therefore, the proposed Project at the Project Site will result in a less than significant impact to the visual character of the area.

The project area is built-out and no significant views are identified by the Community Plan. Further, the Project Site has been developed for over 30 years with office and industrial buildings. The Project Site is surrounded by developed commercial, retail, and industrial building to the north, west, south, and east. The proposed construction will be similar style, density, height, bulk, and setback to existing buildings in the area. Therefore, the proposed Project at the Project Site will result in a less than significant impact to the existing aesthetic image or value of the area.

### **Add Area**

Current views looking westward from Shirley Avenue include the foreground, middleground, and background; looking northward from Nordhoff Street include foreground and very limited portions of the background; looking northward from Prairie Street include the foreground and limited views of the background; looking southward from Plummer Street include the foreground and limited views of the background; and looking eastward from Corbin Avenue include the foreground.

The development scenarios analyzed could result in construction of buildings six stories or 75 feet in height. Due to the existing low rise development of the Add Area, development of six stories or 75 feet in height could result in a significant impact on foreground views into the Add Area and background views from this location. However, views in the area are of retail, industrial and office developments that are not considered significant by the Community Plan. Far background views of the Santa Susana and Santa Monica Mountains that can be seen from portions of the Add Area are sporadic and located at such a distance from the Add Area that the proposed development would not result in a significant impact to these background views. Therefore, the development scenarios analyzed for the Add Area will result in a less than significant impact on views due to conflict with the Community Plan.

The proposed zoning for the Add Area is C2-1. This zoning designation allows for unlimited height and an FAR of 1.5: 1. Buildings on properties adjacent to the Project Site are two and three-stories in height. However, buildings of six, eight and ten stories are located in the nearby project area within the viewshed. Therefore, a proposed development of six stories or 75 feet in height would not exceed allowable height or zoning regulations and will result in a less than significant impact to views due to non-compliance zoning regulations.

The project area is characterized as a major commercial corridor. There are no natural features or significant views in the project area. The development scenarios analyzed for the Add Area would result in continuity with the current commercial and enclosed industrial nature of the Add Area and project area. This would not eliminate any natural feature in the area. Further, the development scenarios propose to continue an existing office-type use and will not result in the insertion of a prominent feature that would change the existing visual character of the area. Therefore, the development scenarios analyzed for the Add Area will result in a less than significant impact to the visual character of the area.

The project area is built-out and no significant views are identified by the Community Plan. Further, the Add Area has been developed with office and industrial buildings for several decades. The Add Area is surrounded by developed commercial, retail, and industrial building to the north, west, south, and east. Construction will be similar style, density, height, bulk, and setback to existing buildings in the area. Therefore, the development scenarios analyzed for the Add Area will result in a less than significant impact to the existing aesthetic image or value of the area.

#### **MITIGATION MEASURES**

Although no significant impacts to views in the project area have been identified, environmental impacts to the character and aesthetics of the area may result from Project implementation at the Project Site and Add Area. However, potential impacts will be mitigated to a less than significant level by the following measures:

1. A master landscape plan for the entire Site shall be prepared by a licensed landscape architect and submitted to the LADCP for review and approval prior to the issuance of any building permit for a structure. A detailed landscape and irrigation plan shall be prepared for each individual building. (O, C, R)
2. A minimum of one 24-inch box tree (minimum trunk diameter of two inches and a height of eight feet at the time of planting) shall be planted for every four new or reconstructed surface parking spaces. (O, C, R)

3. The owners shall maintain the subject property clean and free of debris and rubbish and to promptly remove any graffiti from the walls, pursuant to Municipal Code Sections 91.8101-F, 91.8904-1, and 91.1707-E. (O, C, R)
4. Exterior walls of new commercial and residential buildings of other than glass may be covered with clinging vines, screened by oleander trees or similar vegetation capable of covering or screening entire walls up heights of at least 9-feet, excluding windows and signs. (O, C, R)
5. Screening of rooftop equipment, to preclude visibility of mechanical equipment from nearby residential areas and the street, shall be incorporated into the building design of each structure. (O, C, R)
6. Outdoor lighting shall be designed and installed with shielding, so that the light source cannot be seen from nearby residential properties. (O, C, R)

#### **LEVEL OF IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION**

Less than significant.

#### **CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

##### ***Related Projects***

Related projects may have a potentially significant impact on the existing viewshed. However, as shown in **Section III, B: Related Projects, Figure 5: Related Projects**, related projects are located at a minimum of one half mile from the Project Site. None of the related projects are located within the direct viewshed of the Project Site and Add Area. Further, none of the related projects is of significant height, massing, or bulk to affect the project viewshed from their locations.

Related projects may also have the potential to significantly impact the existing visual character of the area. Due to the developed, urban nature of the San Fernando Valley, Related Projects 1,2,3,6,7,9, and 10 would not have a significant impact on the visual character of project area. However, within the Porter Ranch area, located approximately 3.0 miles north of the Project Site, some undeveloped land still exists. Related Projects 4 and 5, located in this area, could result in a potentially significant impact to the visual character of the Porter Ranch area due to the existing undeveloped nature of that area. However, Related Projects 4 and 5 are located a minimum of three miles north of the Project Site and will not significantly affect the visual character of the immediate project area. Therefore, related projects will result in a less than significant impact to the viewshed or visual character of the project area.

***Proposed Project, Add Area, and Related Projects***

The proposed Project at the Project Site and development scenarios analyzed for the Add Area, in combination with related projects, will result in a less than significant impact to the existing viewshed or visual character of the project area. Therefore, a significant cumulative impacts to aesthetics is not anticipated.