

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

A. AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

1. ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

a. Physical Setting

(1) Visual Character of the Project Area

The visual character of the area is that of a developed urban corridor as shown in *Figure 22: Photo of Surround Area*. The project site is currently surrounded by a mix of retail, commercial, and residential uses. Most development in the area is restricted to three to four stories. However, a ten-story office building (the Downey Savings building) is located at the northwest corner of the Riverside Drive/Woodman Avenue intersection. Surrounding development is typical in visual character of a community area built out between the 1950's through 1970's. When the existing shopping center at the project site was built in the early 1960's, the Fashion Square employed an outdoor mall concept and a modern design for that time. Since its original construction, the shopping center has undergone several renovations for which the design has been influenced by community input. Most notably, when the shopping center was enclosed, community input directed that the mall minimize its access and retail frontages along Riverside Drive and maintain a relatively "low key" façade opposite existing residences north of Riverside Drive.

None of the surrounding roadways have been designated as a scenic highway by the Van Nuys-North Sherman Oaks Community Plan. The closest scenic highways identified by the Community Plan are Sherman Way and Beverly Glen, located approximately four miles northwest one mile to the southwest of the project site, respectively.

No other scenic resources of significance are known to exist within the project area. The project site does not contain any specific trees, rock outcroppings or historic buildings that contribute toward visual character. The Community Plan identifies five historical-cultural monuments within the Plan Area, which included the Tower of Wooden Pallets, the Van Nuys Woman's Club Building, the Valley Municipal Building (Van Nuys City Hall), "The Magnolia" (a.k.a. Hirschberg) residence, and the Baird House. However, these resources are not within the immediate vicinity of the project site.

The City of Los Angeles recently adopted (July 2007) the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan, which targets the revitalization of a 32-mile segment of the Los Angeles River and the land uses that surround it. Although the river corridor has not been designated a scenic resource, the intent of the Master Plan is to facilitate a "greening" of key portals to the river. The Los Angeles River parallels the Ventura Freeway immediately south of the project site and then traverses to the north side of the freeway westerly of Hazeltine Avenue. Because of intervening development and fences, the river is not visible from the project site. The project site's relationship to, and consistency with the Master Plan are discussed in Section IV: Environmental Impact Analysis: F-Land Use, Planning and Urban Decay, of this DEIR.



FIGURE 22
PHOTO OF SURROUNDING AREA

(2) *Existing Views in the Project Area*

Views of the project site can be described from three general land use source areas: (1) views from the Ventura Freeway; (2) views from surrounding businesses on Hazeltine and Woodman Avenues; and (3) views from local residences along Riverside Drive. *Figure 23: Existing View – Woodman Avenue Frontage, Figure 24: Existing View – Riverside Drive and Woodman Avenue Intersection, Figure 25: Existing View – Riverside Drive, Figure 26: Existing View – Riverside Drive, Figure 27: Existing View – Riverside Drive and Hazeltine Avenue Intersection, and Figure 28: Existing View – Hazeltine Avenue*, shows views as seen from these adjacent land uses.

Views of the project site from passing motorists along the Ventura Freeway are relatively non-descript. In this area, the freeway is elevated approximately five to twelve feet above the project site elevations as it passes over the Woodman Avenue and Hazeltine Avenue roadways that bound the east as west side of the project site, respectively. The southern edge of the project site, which directly abuts the freeway right-of-way, is lined with trees ranging approximately 30 to 50 feet in height. At typical travel speeds along the freeway, views into the project site are generally screened by the trees; however, intermittent views of the existing parking structures, the upper levels of which are at the same height as the freeway, and signage for the shopping center are visible through the trees.

The majority of the surrounding businesses to the north, east and west of the project site are oriented to face toward the adjacent roadways on which they front. In general, retail businesses along Riverside Drive and Woodman Avenue have views that are defined by their respective frontage parking lots, abutting streetscape and immediate adjacent businesses. Views towards and of the project site from single story retail businesses in the immediate area are not substantial because the project site is generally not visible from within these buildings. However, four taller office buildings are located in the immediate area, which have views directly facing the project site. The Sunkist office building, located on the west side of Hazeltine Avenue faces the western edge of the project site and has views dominated by the existing Bloomingdale's department store and the four level parking structure. The ten-story Downey Savings building and the adjacent two-story, professional office building are located on the north side of Riverside Drive directly across from the Riverside Woodman Shopping Center, which is located on the same block as the shopping center but is not a part of the Fashion Square site. Both of these office structures have partial views that include the easterly parking structure area and the Macy's department store, in addition to the street frontage that extends along this area. Because of its height, occupants in the upper stories of the Downey Savings building also have unobstructed views of the Santa Monica Mountains to the south and an overview perspective of the entire project site. The fourth tall building in the area is the 5 story LB bank building on Woodman Avenue. This building has a direct view of the east surface parking area. Because of its height and location, occupants of this building have unobstructed views of the Santa Monica Mountains to the south.

Views from surrounding residents are mostly restricted to those residences directly north of Riverside Drive. Although there are residential areas south of the site (south of the Ventura

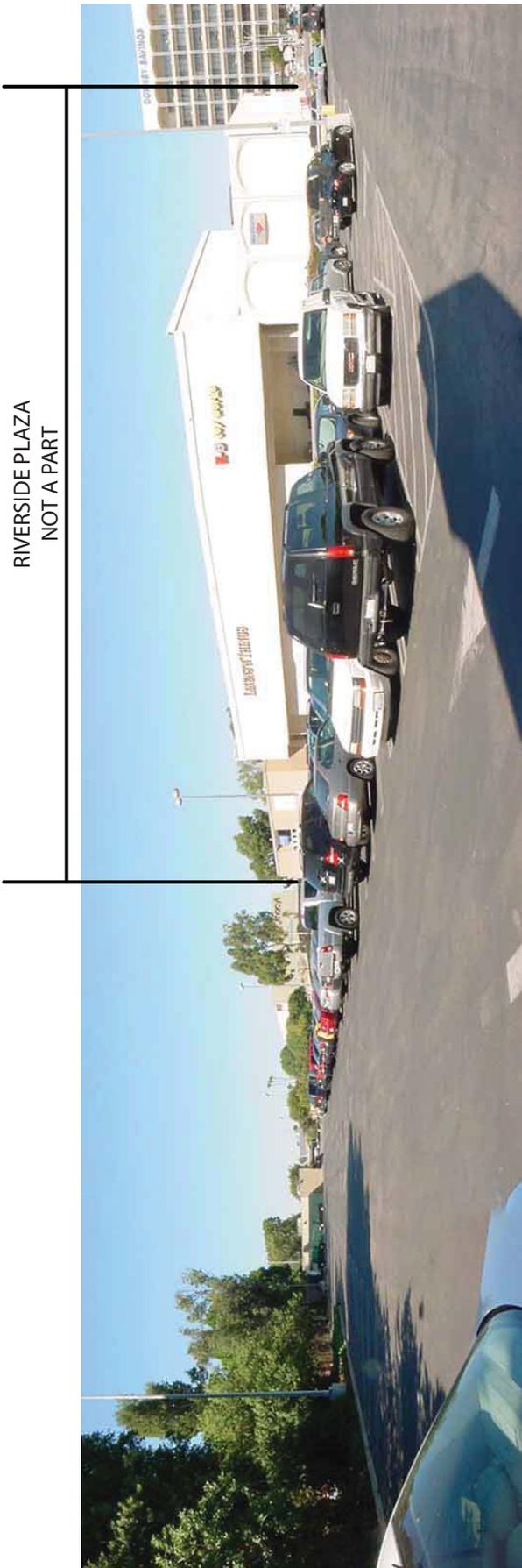


FIGURE 23
EXISTING VIEW – WOODMAN AVENUE FRONTAGE

MAP SOURCE: PLANNING ASSOCIATES, INC.



FIGURE 24
EXISTING VIEW – RIVERSIDE DRIVE AND WOODMAN AVENUE INTERSECTION

MAP SOURCE: PLANNING ASSOCIATES, INC.

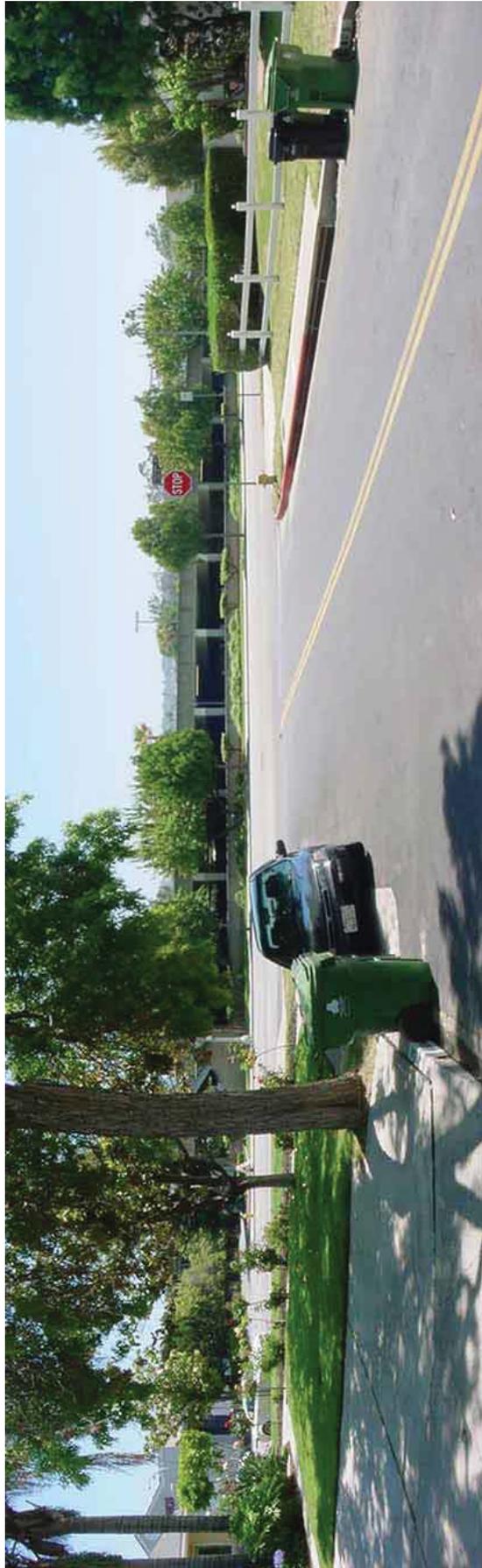


FIGURE 25
EXISTING VIEW – RIVERSIDE DRIVE

MAP SOURCE: PLANNING ASSOCIATES, INC.

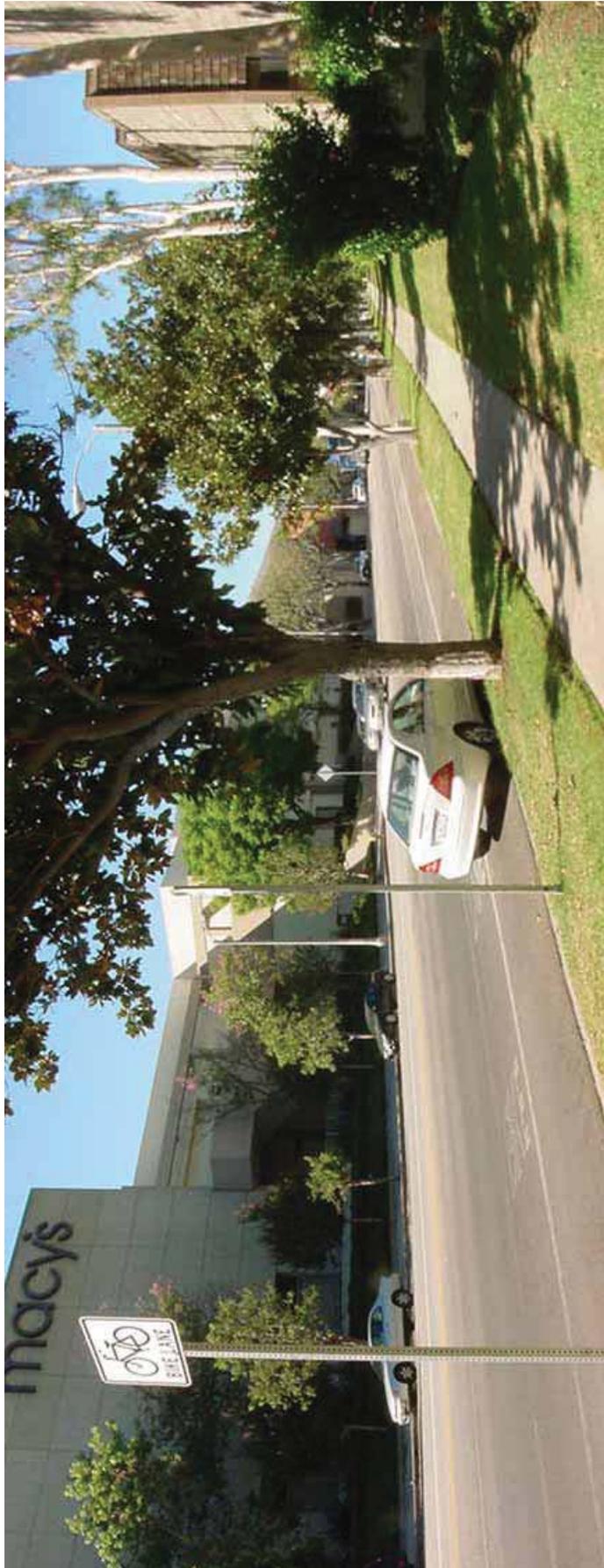


FIGURE 26
EXISTING VIEW – RIVERSIDE DRIVE

MAP SOURCE: PLANNING ASSOCIATES, INC.



FIGURE 27
EXISTING VIEW – RIVERSIDE DRIVE AND HAZELTINE AVENUE INTERSECTION

MAP SOURCE: PLANNING ASSOCIATES, INC.



FIGURE 28
EXISTING VIEW – HAZELTINE AVENUE

MAP SOURCE: PLANNING ASSOCIATES, INC.

Freeway) and to the east and west of the site on the opposite side of local businesses, views of the project site from these locations are relatively insignificant because they are already obstructed by existing commercial developments, the freeway and landscaping.

Residences to the north that have direct views of the project site include several two story multi-residential uses along the middle segment of Riverside Drive (from approximately Murietta Avenue to Matilija Avenue), and one- and two-story single-family homes along the first block of Matilija Avenue and Ranchito Avenue. Components of the existing shopping center that are visible to residents north of Riverside Drive include the Bloomingdale's and Macy's department stores exterior as anchor buildings, the Riverside Drive frontage of the shopping center exterior, and the two-story Macy's department store parking structure across from Matilija Avenue. The two-story Riverside Woodman Shopping Center is also prominent along this frontage.

Because Ranchito Avenue is oriented at a right-angle perpendicular to Riverside Drive, and homes are set back from the street and there are a number of street trees, views from residences along this street are very limited and generally visible only from the street right-of-way. Views from residences along Matilija Avenue are more relevant because of a curved orientation of this street and the absence of any significant street trees affords a more direct view. Homes closest to the Riverside Drive frontage have very limited view to the mountains toward the south because they are already obscured by existing development. As shown of *Figure 29: Existing View – Existing Residents, North of Riverside Drive*. Residences located more than one-half block to the north have intermittent views of the distant Santa Monica Mountains to the south.

(3) *Existing Light, Glare and Nighttime Illumination in the Project Area*

The project site is located along a developed commercial corridor. Because of the urban nature of this area, there is a relatively moderate level of general ambient nighttime illumination and light/glare sources from existing commercial retail and office uses, including the existing shopping center, and street and parking lot lighting along local roadways. Individual uses also contribute specifically to lighting. Existing light sources to the north include: (1) retail and commercial uses at the Riverside Drive/Hazeltine Avenue intersection; (2) multi-family residential uses along the north side of Riverside Drive from approximately Murietta Avenue to Matilija Avenue; (3) commercial and retail uses at the intersection of Riverside Drive and Woodman Avenue; (4) retail immediately adjacent to the western portion of the site; and (5) Notre Dame High School located at the northeastern corner of the Riverside Drive/Woodman Avenue intersection. To the west, lighting sources consist of retail and commercial uses at the Riverside Drive/Hazeltine Avenue intersection and offices. To the south, the Ventura Freeway generates vehicular lighting and illumination of freeway signs. To the east, lighting sources include the commercial development located along the east side of Woodman Avenue.

For public safety purposes, night lighting sources at the project site currently include identification and way-finding signs; security lighting for the existing building, building entrances, parking structures and surface parking; and vehicular lighting. Nighttime lighting levels begin approximately 1-2 hours after closing of the shopping center.



FIGURE 29
EXISTING VIEW – EXISTING RESIDENTS, NORTH OF RIVERSIDE DRIVE

MAP SOURCE: PLANNING ASSOCIATES, INC.

(4) Existing Shade and Shadow in the Project Area

Shade and shadow conditions are influenced by an area's solar access potential, and determined by several factors that include those related to climate, geographic location and local site conditions. The project area is characterized by a Mediterranean climate that experiences hot, dry summers and a rainy winter season. The regional climatic conditions, described more specifically in Section IV: Environmental Impact Analysis: B-Air Quality of this DEIR, are predominantly sunny throughout the year. The amount of solar radiation potential, as well as the length and direction of shadows, at a particular site also varies based on the time of the year and/or day. Shadow lengths increase during the "low sun" and hence are at their longest during the winter solstice (i.e., during December). Generally, in the project region (which lies within the northern hemisphere) shadows are cast to the west in the morning and east in the afternoon, passing to the north as they transition from west to east through the course of a day.

Uses sensitive to shade/shadow concerns are those that either rely on the access to solar radiation for passive energy needs and/or have useable spaces that best function with some minimum level of solar access (i.e., such as school playgrounds, residential uses, or solar panel/photovoltaic cell sites).

The project site is located on a relatively flat parcel, which slopes down from northeast to southwest, and is located with the valley area northerly of the Santa Monica Mountains and the Hollywood Hills. The surrounding area is void of major topographical transitions. Existing buildings on the project site are generally under 65 feet in height, with some elements being slightly taller but not exceeding 75 feet. Shadows from these existing structures do shadow the residential properties fronting on the north side of Riverside Drive during winter mornings and afternoons.

b. Regulatory and Policy Setting

(1) Van Nuys-North Sherman Oaks Community Plan

As noted above, the Community Plan does not identify any significant visual and/or scenic resources within or immediately adjacent to the project site. However, the Community Plan does provide generalized urban design policies and standards to ensure that projects, public spaces and rights-of-way incorporate specific elements of good design. The intent of the urban design guidelines in the Community Plan is to promote a stable and pleasant environment. In commercial corridors, the emphasis is on the provision and maintenance of the visual continuity of streetscapes and the creation of an environment that encourages pedestrian and economic activity. The Community Plan also acknowledges that a community's identity can be enhanced by individual projects through improvements to the streetscape and landscaping in public spaces and rights-of-way.

The Urban Design policies in the Community Plan generally seek to:

- Orient commercial structures toward the main commercial street where a parcel is located and avoid pedestrian/vehicular conflicts.
- Provide for massing, proportion and scale of all new buildings and remodels that is at a pedestrian scale.
- Provide articulated architecture (and/or landscaping) that offers variation and visual interest, and enhances the streetscape by providing continuity and avoiding opportunities for graffiti.
- Utilize building materials to provide relief to untreated portions of exterior building facades and avoid large sterile expanses of building walls that are in harmony with the surrounding neighborhood.
- Design parking structures to be integrated with the design of the buildings they serve.
- Provide landscaping within surface parking areas.
- Provide appropriate exterior lighting to enhance pedestrian access and safety, while avoiding spillover on adjacent residential uses.

(2) *Los Angeles Municipal Code*

The project site is not subject to any special design districts. However, the project site and adjacent properties are within Height District 1L, which permits structures up to six stories and 75 feet in height. See also Section IV: Environmental Impact Analysis: F-Land Use, Planning and Urban Decay of this DEIR, for a more detailed description of the applicable existing and proposed zoning requirements, including those addressing height.

2. THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following factors are set forth in the LA CEQA Thresholds Guide for consideration, on a case-by-case basis, of the significance of potential environmental impacts:

a. Visual Quality and Character

- 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; and
- Applicable guidelines and regulations.

b. Views

- 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); and
- 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.

c. Shade/Shadow

- A project impact would normally be considered significant if shadow-sensitive uses would be shaded by project-related structures for more than three hours between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time (between late October and early April), or for more than four hours between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time (between early April and late October).

d. Light/Glare and Nighttime Illumination

- The change in ambient illumination levels as a result of project sources; and
- The extent to which project lighting would spill off the project site and effect adjacent light sensitive areas.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

a. Relevant Project Characteristics

The Proposed Project includes construction of approximately 280,000 GLSF of retail and restaurant uses, as well as two multi-level parking structures and surface parking area. The proposed retail expansion building and main six-level parking structure will be constructed primarily in the space between the existing shopping center (located immediately adjacent to the Riverside Drive frontage) and the Ventura (US 101) Freeway that is currently occupied by a portion of the existing mall parking structure and surface parking. A second four-level parking structure will be constructed on the eastern portion of the project site, adjacent to Woodman Avenue. New construction will not exceed 75 feet in height (with the highest component being the main parking structure), nor will the new construction exceed the height of the existing Macy's building, which has a maximum height of 722 feet above sea level. New construction will be consistent with height limits of the C2-1L zoning on the project site.

Figure 17: Proposed Building Elevations, in Section II: Project Description, shows the general bulk, mass and architecture of the proposed structures relative to the existing buildings. This elevation shows that in addition to views of the new parking structures visible to the south and east of the Macy's department store, the Riverside and Hazeltine façades of the existing shopping center buildings will be updated through building colors, material accents and landscaping that will visually tie the entire project together and enhance the pedestrian-scale environment. Specifically, the Riverside Drive building surfaces would be refreshed with a new graphic design treatment that would consist of small visual mosaics of color and pattern intended to visually minimize the massing of the long linear wall along the frontage. It is intended that a combination of landscaping, hardscaping and building finish elements would create a vibrant urban atmosphere that offers more pedestrian-friendly linear banding and gives a fresh, updated look to the shopping center. The structural frontage along Riverside Drive (i.e., Bloomingdale's and Macy's department stores, shopping center, loading docks) will not be substantially altered except as necessary to accommodate access to the tunnel reactivation.

The new main six-level parking structure will be constructed south of the existing Macy's department store and associated parking structure, and will be set back from the Riverside Drive frontage approximately 300 feet.

Existing vegetation on the site is limited to landscaping associated with the existing development and trees that buffer the site from the adjacent Ventura Freeway on the south. Project construction would require removal of 45 mature trees, 7 of which are in poor health. Upon completion of project construction, any trees removed during construction will be replaced on a 1:1 basis, per the LAMC. Landscaping proposed with the Proposed Project is generally illustrated in *Figure 187: Conceptual Landscape Plan -1* and in *Figure 19: Conceptual Landscape Plan -2*, as provided in Section II: Project Description, of this DEIR.

The proposed landscape plan for the Proposed Project would focus primarily on the enhancing the Riverside Drive and Hazeltine Avenue frontages at the project site, and the addition of new and replacement landscaping within and adjacent to the newly constructed areas, including

driveways and the east surface parking lot. The proposed Conceptual Landscape Plan can be described as consisting of three landscape elements: (1) perimeter landscaping; (2) internal landscaping; and (3) architectural accent landscaping. Each landscape element will contain both vertical and horizontal components. The horizontal components provide visual continuity and the vertical elements will provide articulation to break up the mass and bulk of the structure. Perimeter landscaping includes landscaping within the required (per LAMC) landscape setbacks along the street frontages and site edges. Perimeter landscaping would include street trees and infill ornamental greenery. The internal landscaping elements include ornamental plantings along driveways, walkways and parking areas within the project site. Internal landscaping includes canopy shade trees throughout the surface parking lots, accent plantings to help define driveways and entrances, and plantings to screen service areas and mechanical equipment. Architectural accent landscaping includes planters, espaliers and similar treatments that are incorporated into the design of the building facades and highlight access points and screen back of house elements.

The Proposed Project would comply with the City of Los Angeles Sign Ordinance. The proposed development will not exceed the height of the existing Macy's building on site and will not exceed the 75-foot height limit allowed by the zoning on site.

The analysis assumes that the following Project Design Features are supported by the Proposed Project:

- A minimum of one 24-inch box tree (minimum diameter of two inches and a height of eight feet at the time of planting) shall be planted for every four new surface parking spaces.
- The Final Expansion Project Landscape Plan, which will be reviewed and approved by the City of Los Angeles, shall incorporate clinging vines and bamboo screening, which provide a variety of textures and colors, along exterior walls visible along the Riverside Drive and Hazeltine Avenue frontages.
- The Final Expansion Project Landscape Plan shall include the installation of healthy mature trees for all replacement trees and new landscaping along Riverside Drive.
- New project landscaping along Riverside Drive would provide an opportunity to visually activate this frontage and minimize building massing. A combination of landscape, hardscape, and building finish elements would create a vibrant urban atmosphere that offers more pedestrian-friendly linear banding and gives a fresh, updated look to the shopping center. The landscape plan would incorporate specimen accent plantings, including distinctive palms, large canopy trees, evergreens, seasonal color trees and bold median plantings. The landscape concept also incorporates various hardscape features, including the integration of street furnishings along the Riverside Drive frontage. Street furnishings, including treated wood benches and cast-in-place concrete seating with integral lighting and water features, would add to the visual interest and appeal of this frontage.

- Directional and security lighting will be required for safety purposes. Through a new plan, lighting can enhance safety along the Riverside Drive and Hazeltine Avenue frontages and add to the perceived security of the neighborhood in general. Lighting would be incorporated into the streetscape environment at several levels, including the use of bollards, wall reveals, seating areas, and crosswalks. The use of plaza strip lighting will afford additional security lighting but with a park-like feel and without significant light intrusion to the surrounding neighborhood. As consistent with safety concerns, the Proposed Project will incorporate low-level lighting that is directed downward and shielded to prevent spillover of light toward sensitive uses.
- The Riverside Drive building surfaces would be refreshed with a new graphic design treatment that would consist of small visual mosaics of color and pattern that effectively serve to visually minimize the massing of the long linear wall along the frontage. It is intended that a combination of landscaping (see discussion below), hardscaping and building finish elements would create a vibrant urban atmosphere that offers more pedestrian-friendly linear banding and gives a fresh, updated look to the shopping center.

The analysis assumes that the Proposed Project will be constructed and operated in accordance with all applicable codes, regulations and standard practices, including the following:

- As required by LAMC Section 12.40, the site will be required to prepare a Landscape Plan which will address replacement of removed trees.
- 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 LAMC Sections 91.8101-F, 91.8904-1, and 91.1707-E.

b. Project Impacts

An Initial Study (IS) was prepared for the Proposed Project. Based on the IS, potential impacts for a number of environmental issues were determined to be less than significant. The scope of the following analysis focuses only on those impacts that were determined through the Notice of Preparation (NOP) and IS process to have a potential significant environmental effect. Issues related to Aesthetics and Visual Resources that were determined to be less than significant, and require no further discussion, include: shade and shadow. An explanation supporting this conclusion is provided in Section VI: Other Environmental Considerations: A-Effects Not Found To Be Significant.

(1) Visual Quality and Character

The visual character of the area is that of a fully developed, commercial corridor. The proposed retail and restaurant expansion would be considered consistent with the commercial nature of the existing uses along Hazeltine Avenue, Woodman Avenue, and within the existing shopping center.

Under the Proposed Project, two new parking structures will be constructed on the southerly and easterly portions of the project site, which are currently developed primarily with surface parking. *Figure 30: Riverside Drive Rendering at Matilija Avenue.* The proposed main six-level parking structure will be accessed from Riverside Drive, and because of the new access and height up to six levels, this parking structure will be visible from the properties immediately north of the Matilija Avenue/Riverside Drive intersection. The new parking structure will extend above the current Macy's parking structure by four levels (or approximately 58 feet); however, this structure would not be taller than the existing Macy's building with a maximum height of 75 feet. The design of both parking structures would be consistent with the design of other parking structures associated with existing commercial uses along this segment of Riverside Drive. The parking structures will also be consistent with existing heights and massing of structures east and west of the project site. Each north-facing parking level of the east-end parking structure by the Macy's department store will be faced with parapet planters to be planted with draping foliage that will serve to soften the visual image of the new parking facilities. The parking structure proposed under the project will extend toward the Riverside Drive frontage and replace a substantial portion of the existing surface parking. Due to the location of the proposed retail expansion to the west of the proposed parking structure, it is anticipated that the retail building will not be visible from the north into the site. Design of the parking structure includes a setback from Riverside Drive of approximately 300 feet, a height consistent with existing structures at the shopping center and the Riverside Woodman Shopping Center as well as the fact that the Proposed Project will not result in the conversion of natural lands or open space; and will not substantially change the existing commercial nature of the site and project area. The Proposed Project will result in a less than significant impact to visual character from the east.

The Proposed Project development would be consistent with the type and height of existing development on the site and would not substantially change the existing commercial nature of the site and project area. Development of the new mall structure would generally not be visible from views along Riverside Drive as existing buildings and the new parking structure would obscure the view. The proposed development will be consistent with the type and height of existing development on the site; will not result in the conversion of natural lands or open space; and will not substantially change the existing commercial nature of the site and project area. The Proposed Project will result in a less than significant impact to the visual character of the area from the north.

Under the project, the Hazeltine Avenue frontage of the existing shopping center will not be altered substantially. Buildings that front Hazeltine Avenue would not be structurally altered. They would only have façade and landscape treatment updates as described herein. As a result, the project will result in a less than significant impact to visual character from the west.

The proposed retail building and parking structure will be located to the south of the existing shopping center and extend to the Ventura (US 101) Freeway. The proposed development will be consistent with the type and height of existing development on the site; will not result in the conversion of natural lands or open space; and will not substantially change the existing commercial nature of the site and project area. The Proposed Project will result in a less than significant impact to visual character from the south.



FIGURE 30
RIVERSIDE DRIVE RENDERING AT MATILAJA AVENUE

MAP SOURCE: PLANNING ASSOCIATES, INC.

The parking structure proposed under the project will extend toward the Woodman Avenue frontage and replace a substantial portion of the existing surface parking. Due to the location of the proposed retail expansion to the west of the proposed parking structure, it is anticipated that the retail building will not be visible from the east into the site. Design of the parking structure includes a setback from Woodman Avenue of approximately 300 feet, a height consistent with existing structures at the shopping center, and uses consistent with the existing and proposed retail and restaurant uses. The proposed development will be consistent with the type and height of existing development on the site; will not result in the conversion of natural lands or open space; and will not substantially change the existing commercial nature of the site and project area. The Proposed Project will result in a less than significant impact to visual character from the east.

In addition to the structural modifications and expansion, the project calls for updating of the landscaping and lighting at the center. The Conceptual Landscape Plan would introduce a more lush, cohesive and robust greenscape treatment along the Riverside Drive, Woodman Avenue and Hazeltine Avenue street frontages than what currently exists (see *Figure 18: Conceptual Landscape Plan -1* and *Figure 19: Conceptual Landscape Plan -2* in Section II: Project Description, of this DEIR). Seven existing trees in poor health would be removed and replaced. Up to 38 additional trees that would be removed to accommodate new construction would be replaced with similar mature trees consistent with species permitted in the approved Landscape Plan. The perimeter landscaping along the street frontages includes a combination of required street trees (e.g., fern pine) intermixed with additional canopy shade (e.g., strawberry tree, jacaranda, or crape myrtle) and iconic accent (e.g., king palm or date palm) trees. Understory plantings, consisting of shrubs, groundcovers and grasses, will be integrated along these edges to relate to the pedestrian experience. Finally, a combination of bamboo screening and espalier evergreen foliage and flowering vines will be incorporated as architectural accent landscaping at the building edges to serve as a vegetated backdrop and breakup the building facades. Intermittent wall planters along the sidewalks and parapet planters incorporated into the exterior of the mall and parking structures will offers accents of color and draping foliage to soften the massing of the new parking facilities.

The Conceptual Landscape Plan proposes a more simplistic landscape treatment internally, with internal landscaping consisting of regularly spaced canopy shade trees within surface parking areas (as on the east side of the project site), and a combination canopy, ornamental accent, and icon specimen trees to define the key parking and driveway edges. To some extent, the internal landscaping elements serve a role in defining vehicular movement and pedestrian access areas. Internal landscaping will also include rooftop and/or open atrium plantings associated with the parking structures and mall expansion building. Such landscaping will consist primarily of shrubs and accent plants in planter containers.

Although enhanced landscaping is proposed along each edge of the project site, the Commercial Corner regulations of the city code requires the provision of a five foot landscape strip along all public streets of a Commercial Corner site. A CUP is requested to deviate from the requirement to provide a five foot landscaped area immediately adjacent to all street frontages. A reduced landscaped setback, ranging in width from zero to five feet, is necessary in some locations to accommodate widening of Riverside Drive, which in turn leaves insufficient area to

accommodate both pedestrian sidewalks and the required landscaping within in the space remaining between the existing buildings. It is intended that extensive incorporation of espalier vines, parapet planters and other plantings which maximize usage of the vertical wall area will generally offset a reduction in landscape depth along street frontages.

During construction activities for the Proposed Project, the visual character of the project site will reflect short-term changes as some of the construction activities will be visible from adjacent land uses. As the majority of the demolition and construction will be located south of the existing shopping center, much of the construction activities will be screened by existing structures on-site. With the exception of the installation of landscaping along the street frontages and the construction of the new Matilija Avenue driveway/signalized intersection at Riverside Drive, much of the construction would be setback from the roadways and adjacent properties. The most visually accessible area for construction activities would be in association with the new easterly parking structure (southeast of the Macy's department store) with regards to residents in the Matilija Avenue vicinity. However, construction security fencing, noise barriers, and staging areas may be located closer to the project site edges and therefore more visible during the short-term construction phase.

During construction, equipment and materials would be stored on-site, and temporary facilities (such as construction trailers, staging sites and portable toilets) would be stored on-site but screened by temporary construction fencing. Because the shopping center will continue to be open to the public during the construction phase, it is anticipated that efforts will be made to continue to present an attractive community presence throughout the duration of the construction activities, and that to enhance safety concerns, construction areas will be clearly partitioned and visually segregated from public areas.

Although construction-related structures and activities would create a notable change to the visual character, these changes would extend only for the duration of the construction activities (approximately 36 to 48 months). Following the completion of construction, the shopping center would resume a visual character similar to what is currently experienced at the project site, but improved and enhanced through an updated façade treatment and embellished landscaping. Since the project will not significantly impact visual elements that substantially contribute to the visual character or image of the area or displace natural open space or contrast or detract from existing features, image or aesthetic values, it will not have a significant impact on the visual quality or character of the area.

(2) *Views*

This discussion examines whether the Proposed Project would create a potential impact to views in the project area. According to the City of Los Angeles CEQA Threshold Guidelines, determination of a significant impact to views should consider the nature and quality of recognized views; whether the project affects views from a designated scenic highway; and the extent of the obstruction of such views. More specifically, a protected view would include a public view from a designated scenic highway, corridor, or parkway; public art; natural landforms; and/or panoramic views from a public roadway, bike path, trail, or other view corridor. Design characteristics to consider in minimizing impacts to views include building

height, massing, landscaping, and grading. Views considered to be protected are those valued public views such as scenic highways and long stretches of public roadways and trails, which generally do not include private views. Views into and from commercially designated properties are not considered to be protected and hence views out of the shopping center are not analyzed.

As discussed above, that portion of the Proposed Project that has the potential to affect views is limited to the view as observed from residences along Matilija Avenue or Riverside Drive and the offices in the taller commercial buildings on Woodman Avenue, Riverside Drive and Hazeltine Avenue.

The Proposed Project proposes a six-level parking structure to be constructed on the southern portion of the project site and a four-level parking structure on the easterly portion of the project site (adjacent to Woodman Avenue), both over areas that are currently developed as surface parking. The new six-level parking structure will be visible from the north, looking into the project site from Riverside Drive, between the existing Macy's department store and the existing Riverside Woodman Shopping Center (located at the southwesterly corner of the Riverside Drive/Woodman Avenue intersection and not part of the project). The six-level parking structure would be located south of the existing two-level Macy's parking structure and set back by approximately 300 feet from Riverside Drive. The parking structure will have semi-open levels broken up with horizontal hanging planters which will visually reduce the building massing. The parking structure will be landscaped with terraced greenery cascading from each level. While views from the north at the eastern end of the project site will be altered, the proposed development would not exceed the height of the existing Macy's building on site and would not exceed the 75-foot height limit allowed by the zoning on site.

As shown in *Figure 30: Riverside Drive Rendering at Matilija Avenue*, near-range views will be replaced with a more intense structural development, entrance way/intersection and greenery. Long-range views toward the distant Santa Monica Mountains, which are currently partially obstructed to most residents in this area by the existing shopping center, the elevated Ventura Freeway and intervening tree canopies, would be fully obstructed from residences situated closest to Riverside Drive that may currently have a partially unobstructed view. Because of the physical distance of these mountains in this long-range view, and the fact that more proximate urban development is the dominant character of the view, the long-range view toward the south is not considered to be visually protected and the change of this viewshed by a few residents would be less than significant.

Based on the type and design of the proposed development, the lack of identified significant views or scenic vistas by the Community Plan in the project area, the lack of protected or recognized views in the project area, and the location of the proposed development within the envelope of the existing site development, the Proposed Project would not result in a less than significant aesthetic impact due to a substantial adverse effect on views into and out of the project site.

(3) *Light, Glare and Nighttime Illumination*

The City of Los Angeles CEQA Significance Thresholds indicates that determination of a significant nighttime illumination impact shall be made with consideration of the following factors: the substantial negative change in ambient illumination levels as a result of project sources and the extent to which light would spill off the site and affect adjacent light sensitive areas. Light sensitive receptors are typically limited to residential areas, while a wide range of uses (including travelers along roadways) may be affected by nuisance glare. The nearest sensitive receptors to the project site are the residential neighborhoods located both north of the project site and south of the project site (south of the Ventura Freeway).

Because of the location of new Proposed Project structures south of existing shopping center buildings, the Riverside Drive frontage of the project site and associate lighting sources would not be substantially altered. The building frontage along this area does not incorporate reflective materials that may create nuisance glare. Proposed landscaping along Riverside Drive and Hazeltine Avenue would include the use of climbing, wall-hugging vines and vertical bamboo screens which would cover much of the existing walls along these frontages. New accent lighting may be introduced along these frontages in association with the Landscape Plan; however, such accent lighting is typically low voltage and directed upward and toward focused landscape elements. Further, neither the existing mall structure nor the proposed new Proposed Project mall structures incorporate windows along these perimeters that would emit lighting from interior uses. The majority of residential uses along Riverside Drive would experience no measurable change in nighttime illumination, lighting or glare due to the Proposed Project. However, in the vicinity of the proposed consolidated project driveway at Riverside Drive and Matilija Avenue, new light and glare sources would be introduced and could impact a limited number of residents (see discussion below).

With construction of the east multi-level parking structure (south of the existing Macy's parking structure) and the new consolidated driveway across from Matilija Avenue, directional and security lighting will be required for safety purposes. The parking structure design will be similar to that of the existing adjacent structure, with open levels that are surrounded by approximate four-foot high concrete walls. Although the lower levels of the new easterly parking structure will be obstructed from view to residents north of Riverside by the existing Macy's parking structure, the upper four levels would be visible and nighttime lighting from those open levels could be visible as ambient illumination but would not create spillover lighting directed at residences. Given the four-foot walls and the angle of observation, vehicle headlights within the new parking structure would be shielded and would not shine toward those residential areas. In addition, because all lighting sources installed under the Proposed Project would be designed such that as much light as possible is contained on site and does not spill onto nearby properties, impacts from nighttime lighting associated with the parking structure would be less than significant.

A similar situation to that described above for residential properties to the north and effects of the parking structure lighting would be observed at those residential buildings on the south the Ventura Freeway. The freeway itself obscures most of the Proposed Project development (and related light sources) from residential development to the south, however the upper one or two

levels of the parking structures may be visible from the upper stories of multi-level residential buildings in that area. As noted, direct lighting from headlights would be blocked by the parking structure walls. Further, the physical distance of these southerly oriented residences would minimize the potential influence of the ambient illumination from security/safety lighting associated with the upper levels of the parking structures.

The proposed lighting sources are consistent with existing lighting sources at the existing shopping center, which already includes project identification and way-finding signs, security lighting for the existing building, building entrances, parking structures and surface parking, and vehicular lighting. These lighting sources are consistent with the commercial nature of the community at large and will not substantially increase ambient illumination levels.

One remaining concern is the potential for nighttime lighting and glare from vehicles exiting the new Riverside Drive project driveway (across from Matilija Avenue) during the night time hours. Because the Fashion Square Lane driveway will be relocated further to the west, it will be situated such that vehicle headlights from exiting vehicles would be directed toward residences on Matilija Avenue. Major roadways in the project site vicinity, including Riverside Drive (a Major Highway) and the Ventura Freeway (a regional freeway), are a major source of vehicle lights in the area, but vehicles traveling along these roads are not directed specifically onto this residential street as they drive past. The main operational hours of the mall would close at 9:00 p.m., with some retail/restaurant uses remaining open until 12:00 midnight only on intermittent occasions, hence the majority of exiting vehicle traffic would be completed before 10:00 p.m. The homes along Matilija Avenue near the intersection with Riverside Drive are oriented so that the front of the homes are perpendicular to the street and setback a minimum of 20-feet from the street, therefore windows are not in the direct line of sight of headlights that would shine through the driveway intersection. Two residences located at each corner of Matilija Avenue also have side yards that face Riverside Drive and would be the primary residences of concern likely to be affected by headlights of vehicles exiting the project site. Headlight beams (from vehicles making left turns) toward the residence on the west corner would be obstructed by an existing hedge on that property which affords an adequate screen. The residence on the east corner has landscaping and fencing that would obscure headlight beams from vehicles making right turns. Because of the relative orientation of the residential structures to the driveway, the existing vehicle activity within the vicinity, and the limited hours of operation at the shopping center, nuisance light from project-related vehicle headlights is not anticipated to be noticeable and less than significant.

(4) Consistency with Applicable Plans and Policies

Consistency with applicable plans and policies, including land use and design policies which indirectly address aesthetics, views and urban design, is discussed in detail in Section IV: Environmental Impact Analysis: F-Land Use, Planning and Urban Decay, of this EIR.

(5) Cumulative Impacts

Visual Character. Impacts to aesthetics are generally site specific and localized. As discussed above, the Proposed Project is anticipated to result in a less than significant aesthetic impact to

the visual character along all project frontages. With the exception of a proposed 23-unit condominium project to be located on Hazeltine Avenue north of Riverside Drive (ENV 2005-6373-MND), none of the related projects are located along the local roadways within the immediate project area. However, the new condominium project in the project site vicinity would be constructed consistent with the Community Plan standards and is a use consistent with the surrounding area. As a result, the Proposed Project would not contribute to a potential cumulative impact to visual character in the project vicinity. A separate, site-specific environmental analysis will be prepared for related projects to determine and, if necessary, mitigate related project-specific potential impacts to visual character. Cumulative visual character impacts of related projects are considered to be less than significant.

Alteration of Views. Although aesthetic impacts are generally site specific to the local setting, impacts that may affect panoramic viewsheds or recognized visual resources can have an effect on a broader area. As discussed above, the Proposed Project is anticipated to result in a less than significant impact to views from residential properties to the north. Related projects in the immediate project area north of the Ventura Freeway, would generally be limited to between two and four stories in height. From a cumulative perspective, these related projects (north of the freeway) would significantly alter viewsheds or the local skyline. Several related projects proposed for locations along the Ventura Boulevard corridor would be larger-scale and may be visible from local viewsheds. However, these projects are not anticipated to have a significant cumulative impact to views within the communities adjacent to the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project would not contribute to a potential cumulative impact to views or viewsheds in the project vicinity. A separate, site-specific environmental analysis will be prepared for related projects to determine and, if necessary, mitigate related project-specific potential impacts to aesthetics. Cumulative impacts related to viewsheds affected by related projects are considered to be less than significant.

Lighting. Buildout of related projects in the project site area will contribute to the overall levels of nighttime illumination and glare in the Van Nuys and Sherman Oaks communities. Glare and direct lighting are site-specific concerns that would be addressed through the separate, site-specific environmental analysis prepared for each related project and, if necessary, mitigate appropriately. Such mitigation would contribute to the reduction of nighttime illumination as well. Because the Proposed Project would not contribute significantly toward increased nighttime lighting levels in the immediate area, its cumulative contribution to lighting is considered to be less than significant.

4. MITIGATION PROGRAM

Although the Proposed Project, with implementation of incorporated project design features and adherence to required standard conditions, would not result in a significant impact to the aesthetics and/or visual resources of the project area, incorporation of the following measures would ensure that any potential impacts are appropriately minimized:

MM AES-1: As required by LAMC Section 12.40, the site will be required to prepare a Landscape Plan which will address replacement of removed trees.

- MM AES-2: 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 LAMC Sections 91.8101-F, 91.8904-1, and 91.1707-E.
- MM AES-3: A minimum of one 24-inch box tree (minimum diameter of two inches and a height of eight feet at the time of planting) shall be planted for every four new surface parking spaces.
- MM AES-4: The Final Expansion Project Landscape Plan, which will be reviewed and approved by the City of Los Angeles, shall incorporate clinging vines and bamboo screening, which provide a variety of textures and colors, along exterior walls visible along the Riverside Drive and Hazeltine Avenue frontages.
- MM AES-5: The Final Expansion Project Landscape Plan shall include the installation of healthy mature trees for all replacement trees and new landscaping along Riverside Drive.
- MM AES-6: New project landscaping along Riverside Drive would provide an opportunity to visually activate this frontage and minimize building massing. A combination of landscape, hardscape, and building finish elements would create a vibrant urban atmosphere that offers more pedestrian-friendly linear banding and gives a fresh, updated look to the shopping center. The landscape plan would incorporate specimen accent plantings, including distinctive palms, large canopy trees, evergreens, seasonal color trees and bold median plantings. The landscape concept also incorporates various hardscape features, including the integration of street furnishings along the Riverside Drive frontage. Street furnishings, including treated wood benches and cast-in-place concrete seating with integral lighting and water features, would add to the visual interest and appeal of this frontage.
- MM AES-7: Directional and security lighting will be required for safety purposes. Through a new plan, lighting can enhance safety along the Riverside Drive and Hazeltine Avenue frontages and add to the perceived security of the neighborhood in general. Lighting would be incorporated into the streetscape environment at several levels, including the use of bollards, wall reveals, seating areas, and crosswalks. The use of plaza strip lighting will afford additional security lighting but with a park-like feel and without significant light intrusion to the surrounding neighborhood. As consistent with safety concerns, the Proposed Project will incorporate low-level lighting that is directed downward and shielded to prevent spillover of light toward sensitive uses.
- MM AES-8: The Riverside Drive building surfaces would be refreshed with a new graphic design treatment that would consist of small visual mosaics of color and pattern that effectively serve to visually minimize the massing of the long

linear wall along the frontage. It is intended that a combination of landscaping, hardscaping and building finish elements would create a vibrant urban atmosphere that offers more pedestrian-friendly linear banding and gives a fresh, updated look to the shopping center.

MM AES-9: All open areas not used for buildings, driveways, parking areas, recreational facilities or walks shall be attractively landscaped and maintained in accordance with a landscape plan, including an automatic irrigation plan, prepared by a licensed landscape architect to the satisfaction of the Planning Department.

MM AES-10: The trees shall be dispersed within the parking area so as to shade the surface parking area and shall be protected by a minimum 6-inch high curb and landscaping.

MM AES-11: Outdoor lighting shall be designed and installed with shielding, so that the light sources for the Proposed Project are shielded from spillover to adjacent residential properties.

5. SIGNIFICANT PROJECT IMPACTS AFTER MITIGATION

With implementation of the standard conditions and project design features identified above, the Proposed Project would not result in significant impacts to the general visual character and views. Impacts associated with lighting and glare impacts would be reduced to less than significant levels. Construction impacts would be short-term and would not be significant. Implementation of recommended mitigation measures identified above, although not required to reduce significant impacts, would further minimize the effects of the project and reinforce the effectiveness of the standard conditions and project design features already required/incorporated into the Proposed Project. Due to the distance between the project site and the nearest related project, approximately 1,000 feet; the fact that there is no property with a direct line of site of both the project site and any related project site; and finally that none of the related projects have unique lighting requirements, there is no potential for a significant cumulative light impact.

