
IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

B. AESTHETICS

1. VIEWS

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Existing Visual Character

Project Site

The project site is located at 10250 Wilshire Boulevard in the Westwood community of the City of Los Angeles (Figure IV.B.1-1). The project site is vacant and topographically flat, and on-site vegetation consists of some ornamental trees that occur both along the eastern boundary and in the southeast corner of the site (Figure IV.B.1-2). In addition, the project site is currently undeveloped. It has recently been employed for seasonal use, both as a pumpkin sales lot and as a Christmas tree sales lot. It was also used as an equipment storage yard during construction of the UCLA Medical Center. Refer to Figure IV.B.1-3, for a photograph location map and Figures IV.B.1-4 and IV.B.1-5 for existing views of the project site.

Surrounding Locale

The project site is located within the Westwood area of the City of Los Angeles, directly adjacent to the City of Beverly Hills. The Westwood area encompasses an urbanized, densely developed area that contains some significant uses including the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), Westwood Village, the Los Angeles Country Club, and the Mormon Temple. The predominant land use in the Westwood area is residential with approximately three percent of the land designated for commercial uses. Within the Westwood area, the project site is located within the Wilshire-Westwood Scenic Corridor Specific Plan Area (Corridor Specific Plan). The Corridor Specific Plan area follows Wilshire Boulevard, which is designated as a Scenic Highway.

The area immediately surrounding the project site is developed with multi-level residential buildings, single-family residential uses, a hotel, the Los Angeles Country Club, and a Department of Water and Power (DWP) distributing station. There are two high-rise condominium buildings located to the northwest of the project site on Wilshire Boulevard which are approximately 20 stories tall (The Comstock Apartment). The Los Angeles Country Club is adjacent to the project site on two sides: directly north (across Wilshire Boulevard), and directly east. Four two-story single-family residential uses are south of the project site, across Club View Drive. West of the project site, on the southwest

Figure IV.B.1-1

Vicinity Map

Figure IV.B.1-2 Aerial Photograph

Figure IV.B.1-3 photograph location map

Figure IV.B.1-4 Existing Views of the Project Site

Figure IV.B.1-5 Existing Views of the Project Site

corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Comstock Avenue, is the Beverly Hills Plaza Hotel, a four-story hotel. Additional low-rise multi-family housing, including three and four story buildings, are located south of Wilshire Boulevard. The DWP facility is located on the northeast corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Comstock Avenue, north of the project site and adjacent to the northern portion of the Country Club. Refer to Figures IV.B.1-6 through Figure VI.B.1-9 for views of surrounding land uses.

Existing Viewsheds

Viewsheds refer to the visual qualities of the geographical area that are defined by the horizon, topography, and other natural features that give an area its visual boundary and context, or by artificial developments that have become prominent visual components of the area. In the area of the proposed project site, the existing viewsheds are defined primarily by the predominantly multi-story residential developments along Wilshire Boulevard, Comstock Avenue, and various other local and collector streets.

Public views are those which can be seen from vantage points which are publicly accessible, such as streets, freeways, parks, and vista points. These views are generally available to a greater number of persons than are private views. Private views are those which can be seen from vantage points located on private property. Private views are not considered to be impacted if an adjacent land use blocks such view, specifically if the project complies with the zoning and design guidelines applicable to the site.

View from the Project Site

As discussed above, the project site is located in an urbanized area. As a result, the project site provides direct views of a nearby hotel and multi- and single-family residential land uses. Existing views to the immediate north of the project site consist of the Department of Water and Power (DWP) distributing station and the fenced off highly vegetated property line of the Los Angeles Country Club (View 7 and View 8). Existing views to the immediate east of the project site also consist of the fenced off highly vegetated property line of the Los Angeles Country Club. Directly behind the fence, but not visible from the vacant project site, is the Los Angeles Country Club maintenance facility (View 10). Existing views to the south of the project site consist of one and two-story single-family residential units and their associated landscaping (View 11 and View 12). Existing southwest views consist of additional multi-family residential uses (View 14). Existing views from the west of the project site consist of a four-story hotel use, Beverly Plaza Hotel (View 15). Existing views from the northwest of the project site consist of the high-rise Comstock condominium buildings (View 6).

Figures IV.B.1-6 Views of surrounding land uses

Figures IV.B.1-7 Views of surrounding land uses

Figures IV.B.1-8 Views of surrounding land uses

Figures IV.B.1-9 Views of surrounding land uses

Views of and Towards the Project Site

While the project site is visible from most directions within the surrounding urban community, it is less visible to a viewer looking westerly along Wilshire Boulevard. As shown in Figures IV.B.1-4 and IV.B.1-5, the site is visible from Wilshire Boulevard, as well as many of the residential uses located along this roadway. Wilshire Boulevard is designated by the City of Los Angeles as a Scenic Highway; however, this roadway is not designated as a State Scenic Highway in the project area. Portions of the project site are also visible from local streets such as Comstock Avenue and Club View Drive. The site is visible from the Beverly Plaza Hotel, located on the southwest corner of Comstock Avenue and Club View Drive, and the single- and multi-family residential land uses along these local roads. However, intervening landscaping and buildings block direct views of the site from some of the residential uses along these local roads.

Existing Zoning, Building Height, and Design Review Regulations

The project site is located within the Westwood Community Plan area and the Wilshire-Westwood Corridor Specific Plan area. Under the Community Plan, the land use designation for the project site is “High Multi-Family Residential”, which allows development of 163.5 multi-family dwelling units per net acre¹ to reflect the site’s underlying zoning, which is [Q]R5-3 (Multiple Family). The project site is located in Height District 3, which allows a floor area of not more than ten times the buildable area of the lot. In accordance with the [Q] condition (Ordinance No. 163,194), development on the project site is subject to Design Review, administered by the Westwood Community Design Review Board.

Although the proposed project is within the Corridor Specific Plan area, it is exempted from the Corridor Specific Plan’s provisions. The Corridor Specific Plan became effective in 1981, shortly after the Final Tract Map was recorded. However, if a tract map application for a project was filed between July 25, 1972 and June 5, 1980, the project is exempt from the Corridor Specific Plan pursuant to Ordinance 155,044, Section 14.A of that plan. The Tract Map application for the proposed project was filed October 31, 1979. Thus, the proposed project is exempt from the provisions of the Corridor Specific Plan.

¹ *The Westwood Community Plan states that this number depicts the reasonable expected population and dwelling units for the year 2010, using the midpoint of the range for the “dwelling units per net acre” category. The midpoint represents a reasonable factor, since new development within each land use category is unlikely to occur at the extremes of the range, but more likely, throughout the entire range.*

Light & Glare

The project site is currently vacant. However, ambient lighting in the vicinity of the project site consists of relatively high levels of lighting. The streets surrounding the project site, Comstock Avenue, Wilshire Boulevard, and Club View Drive include streetlights along their entire length. Overall, existing ambient lighting levels surrounding the project site are relatively high.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Thresholds of Significance

For the purposes of this EIR, the development of an incongruous structure relative to its location, loss of a major scenic view, or loss of a major open space resource would be considered a significant visual impact. The following are guidelines based on the City of Los Angeles CEQA Thresholds Guide, to determine if there would be an impact:

- The amount or relative proportion of existing features or elements that substantially contribute to the valued visual character of image of a neighborhood, community, or localized area;
- The amount of natural open space to be graded or developed;
- The degree of contrast between proposed features and existing features that represent the area's valued aesthetic image;
- The degree to which the project would contribute to the area's aesthetic value;
- Applicable guidelines and regulations;
- 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 the mountains or the ocean);
- Whether the project affects views from a designated scenic highway, corridor, or parkway; and
- The extent of obstruction (e.g. total blockage, partial interruption, or minor diminishment).

Project Characteristics Relevant to Aesthetics

As described in detail in Section III, Project Description, the project applicant proposes to develop the project site with 35 condominium units (with accessory housekeeping space) pursuant to a previous Tentative Tract Map (TTM) approval granted in 1979 and recorded on October 31, 1979. The 202,616 square foot high-rise residential building would be 21 stories in height or 301 feet tall. 52.8 percent or 13,203 square feet of the existing vacant lot would be developed with the proposed high-rise building. The remaining 47.2 percent or 11,814 square feet of the project site would consist of open space. Parking would be provided on-site for approximately 103 vehicles in a three level subterranean parking structure. Total grading would consist of approximately 38,600 square feet of soil being exported. Figures IV.B.1-10 through IV.B.1-12, portray renderings of the proposed residential high-rise within the existing setting.

As shown in Figures IV.B.1-10 through IV.B.1-14, the proposed project has been designed to incorporate a use of crisp, symmetrical geometric forms. The proposed residential building would be 301 feet tall. A decorative two-story base provides a well-matched scale to the street and surrounding smaller buildings, and includes black, grey, and white marble facing. The windows are a silver tone with accents in the carved panels in gold. The middle floors of the building enhance the verticality of the structure with large windows and delicately fluted precast piers in a soft white tone. Balconies with glass railings punctuate the corners and give added dimension to the tower. The top of the building steps back to reveal offsets to create an aesthetically pleasing skyline (refer to Section III. Project Description, for Architectural Detail Figures).

No part of the parking garage, other than access ramps, would be visible from any of the streets. Roof decks resulting from the parking structure are integrated with the extensive landscape program of gardens and terraces and visible vertical surfaces are articulated to be compatible and integral with the architecture of the building. As described in Section III. Project Description, the landscape design, which would incorporate 14,053 square feet of open space, is inspired by that which was traditionally found surrounding famous Los Angeles residential landmarks. A green environment would be created benefiting the surrounding community and ensuring a comfortable fit of the building on the project site. The design results in a transition from the scale of the building to the human scale at Wilshire Boulevard, Comstock Avenue, and Club View Drive.

Figures IV.B.1-10 Rendering

Figure IV.B.1-11 Rendering

Figure IV.B.1-12 Rendering

Figure IV.B.1-13 Rendering

Figure IV.B.1-14 Rendering

Project Impacts

Post-Project Views of and Towards the Project Site

Due to the height and location of the proposed project in a highly urbanized area, it would be highly visible from all of the viewing locations previously described for the existing vacant lot. Such viewing locations include portions of Wilshire Boulevard and local streets in the project area (i.e., Comstock Avenue and Club View Drive), as well as from the hotel and single- and multi-family residential uses along these roadways (refer to Figures IV.B.1-4 and IV.B.1-5). Visibility of the proposed project from adjacent land uses and roadways, including a City-designated Scenic Highway (Wilshire Boulevard), is not considered to be a significant impact. This is because the project area is highly urbanized with a mix of hotel and residential uses, including multi-story apartment and condominium buildings, and because the proposed project is consistent with the site's zoning and height requirements.

The proposed project would not result in the obstruction of any public scenic views. While the site would be visible from portions of public areas such Wilshire Boulevard, a City designated Scenic Highway, it would not obstruct any scenic views (i.e. ocean, mountains, coastline) (Figures IV.B.1-4). Therefore, impacts relative to public scenic views would be less than significant.

The proposed project would result in the obstruction and partial obstruction of private views from private properties located immediately south, southwest, and southeast of the project site. Specifically, the proposed project would obstruct and partially obstruct private views of Wilshire Boulevard and the surrounding residential uses as seen from the one- and two-story residential uses located immediately south, southwest, and southeast of the project site. However, as mentioned previously private views are not considered to be impacted if an adjacent land use blocks such view, specifically if the project is within the zoning and design guidelines designated for the site. Furthermore, proposed high-rise is representative of the Westwood-Wilshire Boulevard area and would incorporate proposed features that represent the area's valued aesthetic image. Therefore, impacts relative to private views would be less than significant.

As previously stated, the project site is located in an urbanized area characterized by predominantly residential uses with varying elevations and building heights. As shown in Figure IV.F-1, Zoning Designations, in Section IV.F of this report, the project site is situated in an area where the zoning designations transition (west to east) from being predominantly single- and multi-family residential to open space (zoned agricultural), which is comprised entirely of the Los Angeles Country Club. The proposed project is considered to be visually compatible with the surrounding land uses fronting Wilshire Boulevard as there are additional high-rise buildings in the area (Figure IV.B.1-12). Specifically, there are other multi-story residential buildings in the immediate area such as the 20-story apartment buildings across Wilshire Boulevard from the project site. In addition, the proposed project

would be subject to design review approval which would assure, among other things, that the building would be compatible in terms of design, massing, and architectural integrity. Furthermore, the project is consistent with the permitted density and building height for the site (as discussed in Section IV.F. Land Use), and even though the proposed project is exempt from the provisions of the Corridor Specific Plan, the following demonstrates how it complies with various design elements.

- The proposed 21-story condominium project conforms to all provisions contained within the Westwood Community Plan and design guidelines.
- No ventilation equipment would be located within public view.
- No part of the parking garage, other than access ramps, would be visible from any of the streets. Roof decks resulting from the parking structure are integrated with the extensive landscape program of terraces and gardens (refer to Figures IV.B.1-10 and IV.B.1-11).
- Landscape material would be compatible with the context of the Wilshire-Westwood Scenic Corridor. The landscape design is inspired by that which was traditionally found surrounding famous Los Angeles residential landmarks. Through a rich variety of plant materials, a lush environment would be created benefiting the surrounding community and ensuring a comfortable fit of the building on the project site. The design results in a transition from the scale of the building to the human scale at Wilshire Boulevard, Comstock Avenue, and Club View Drive (refer to Section III. Project Description, Figure III-20, Landscape Plan). There would be a total of 14, 053 square feet of open space.

Therefore, visual compatibility impacts are considered to be less than significant.

Lighting

The project site is located in an urban area characterized by a mix of high-rise and low-rise residential land uses that are sources of nighttime lighting and daytime glare. As the project site is currently vacant, except for seasonal uses, the proposed project would introduce a greater amount of nighttime lighting to the project site. Such lighting sources include interior lighting, exterior security lighting, and headlights associated with motor vehicles using the main driveway off of Club View Drive. Some of the project building materials (i.e., windows) as well as automobile windshields also represent sources of daytime glare.

However, architectural lighting for the proposed project would be designed to highlight architectural elements of the project. Security lighting would be installed as required to provide a secure environment in and around the project site. The majority of lighting features would be directed towards

the interior of the site and directed away from the neighboring hotel and single- and multi-family residential land uses. In addition, architectural features and facades would be constructed of materials of low reflectivity. The project would incorporate a variety of building materials, which would be selected and located so as to minimize the transmission of illumination from interior lights. Overall, the proposed project would not cause excessive glare that is out of character with the land uses surrounding the project site, or result in a substantial increase in glare which would affect sensitive uses in the area. Light and glare impacts would be potentially significant but can be mitigated to less than significant levels by implementing the proposed light and glare mitigation measures below.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Development of the proposed project in conjunction with the related projects listed in Section II. Environmental Setting would result in an intensification of land uses in an already urbanized area of the City. While the related projects and the proposed project would be visible from public and private properties, none of the related projects are in close proximity to the proposed project and none, therefore, would combine with the proposed project to obstruct existing public scenic views. Furthermore, because there are no related projects in close proximity to the project site, there would be no combination of glare effects that might result in cumulative impacts. Impacts would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES

The following mitigation measures are required to ensure the proposed project does not result in any significant impacts to visual resources:

1. All open areas not used for buildings, driveways, parking areas, or walkways 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 City Planning Department.
2. Outdoor lighting shall be directed on-site and designed and installed with shielding so that the light source can not be seen from adjacent land uses.
3. The exterior of the proposed buildings shall be constructed of non-reflective building materials.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

Project impacts associated with views would be less than significant.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

B. AESTHETICS

2. SHADE/SHADOW

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The issue of shade and shadow pertains to the blockage of direct sunlight by on-site buildings, which affect adjacent properties. Shading is an important environmental issue because the users or occupants of certain land uses, such as residential, recreational, churches, schools, outdoor restaurants, and pedestrian areas have expectations for direct sunlight and warmth from the sun. These land uses are termed “shadow-sensitive”.

Shadow lengths are dependent on the height and size of the building from which it is cast and the angle of the sun. The angle of the sun varies with respect to the rotation of the earth (i.e. time of day) and elliptical orbit (i.e. change in seasons). The longest shadows are cast during the winter months and the shortest shadows are cast during the summer months. The following discussion describes the winter solstice and some general assumptions that effect shadow patterns in the project vicinity.

Winter Solstice

“Solstice” is defined as either of the two points on the earth’s orbit around the sun that lie midway between the equinoxes (separated from them by an angular distance of 90°). At the solstices, the sun’s apparent position on the celestial sphere reaches its greatest distance above or below the celestial equator, about 23 1/2° of the arc. At winter solstice, about December 21, the sun is overhead at noon at the Tropic of Capricorn; this marks the beginning of winter in the Northern Hemisphere. Measuring shadow lengths for the winter solstice represents the extremes of the shadow patterns that occur throughout the year. Shadows cast on the winter solstice are the longest they are all year. For this analysis shadows are shown for December (Figure IV.B.2-1) portraying the longest shadows of the year.

Assumptions

Topography was not incorporated as an input in the following analysis because the changes in elevation in the area of the project site are minimal. Building height, which was assumed to be 301 feet, was based on available architectural diagrams. The worst case or highest portion of the proposed building was used for the shadow analysis. The dimensions, setbacks, and placement of existing buildings were estimated based on architectural site plans and aerial photographs of the project vicinity.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Thresholds of Significance

According to the Westwood Community Design Review Board Specific Plan (Section 6.B.2), a shadow impact is considered significant if adjacent residential uses would be one-third or more shaded by project-related structures for more than two hours between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. Pacific Standard Time on December 21.

Although the proposed project is within the Corridor Specific Plan area, it is exempt from the Corridor Specific Plan's provisions. The Corridor Specific Plan became effective in 1981, shortly after the Final Tract Map was recorded. However, if a tract map application for a project was filed between July 25, 1972 and June 5, 1980, the project is exempt from the Corridor Specific Plan pursuant to Ordinance 155,044, Section 14.A of that plan. The Tract Map application for the proposed project was filed on October 31, 1979. Thus, the proposed project is exempt from the provisions of the Corridor Specific Plan. However, in accordance with the [Q] condition on the project site (163,194) the proposed project is subject to the Design Review Board approval. Therefore, for the purpose of this study the threshold outlined above has been used.

Project Impacts

For the purpose of a thorough analysis each month for the year has been graphically depicted and analyzed. However, project impacts were solely based on the above threshold, which states that a shadow impact is considered significant if adjacent residential uses would be one-third or more shaded by project-related structures for more than two hours between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. Pacific Standard Time on December 21.

Proposed Shadow Patterns

December

As shown in Figure IV.B.2-1, the December shadows, which are the longest shadows of the year, would partially shade one of high-rise multi-family residential uses located northwest of the project site. The partial shading would occur on the lower levels of the high-rise structure as the proposed building is approximately the same height and therefore would not be able to cast shadows "over" the high-rise residential structure. Shadows cast from the proposed building would shade portions of high-rise residential building from approximately sunrise (6:55 A.M.) until approximately 9:30 A.M. Therefore, as the December shadows do not cast on any adjacent residential uses for two or more hours between the hours of 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M., impacts would be less than significant.

Figure IV.B.2-1 December Shadows

On the north and south sides of Wilshire Boulevard the Los Angeles Country Club and its associated uses are shaded for more than two hours. However, as the Los Angeles Country Club is not a residential use the December shadow impacts would be less than significant.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Development of the proposed project, in conjunction with the related projects listed in Section II, would result in an increase of shading impacts of various land uses in an already urbanized area of the City. While many of the related projects and the proposed project would shade adjacent properties, none of the related projects are in close proximity to the proposed project and none, therefore, would combine with the proposed project to create additional shadow impacts. Cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES

No significant shade and shadow impacts would occur as a result of the proposed project. Therefore, no mitigation measures are required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

The proposed project would not result in any significant shading impacts to nearby shadow sensitive uses during any part of the year.