

# 5.1 Aesthetics

## 5.1.1 INTRODUCTION

This section describes the visual setting and aesthetic character of the Project site and evaluates the potential for the Proposed Project to result in impacts to the visual character and quality of the Project site. The analysis focuses on changes that would be seen from public viewpoints and provides an assessment of whether aesthetic changes from Proposed Project implementation would result in a conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality. Descriptions of existing aesthetic/visual conditions are based, in part, on site visits by the consulting team, analysis of aerial photography (Google Earth Pro, 2020), and the Proposed Project application materials submitted to the Los Angeles Harbor Department (LAHD) described in Section 3.0, *Project Description*, of this EIR. This section is also based, in part, on the following documents and resources:

- *City of Los Angeles General Plan Safety Element*, Adopted 24 November 2021
- *City of Los Angeles Municipal Code*
- *Port of Los Angeles Master Plan Update Environmental Impact Report 2013*
- *Port Master Plan*, Adopted September 2018
- *California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Scenic Highway Mapping System*

### Aesthetics Terminology

- **Aesthetic resources** include a combination of numerous elements, such as landforms, vegetation, water features, urban design, and/or architecture, that provide an overall visual impression that is pleasing to, or valued by, its observers. Factors important in describing the aesthetic resources of an area include visual character, scenic resources, and scenic vistas. These factors together not only describe the intrinsic aesthetic appeal of an area, but also communicate the value placed upon a landscape or scene by its observers.
- **Scenic resources** are visually significant hillsides, ridges, water bodies, and buildings that are critical in shaping the visual character and scenic identity of the area and surrounding region.
- **Scenic vistas** are defined as panoramic views of important visual features, as seen from public viewing areas. This definition combines visual quality with information about view exposure to describe the level of interest or concern that viewers may have for the quality of a particular view or visual setting.
- **Visual character** broadly describes the unique combination of aesthetic elements and scenic resources that characterize a particular area. The quality of an area's visual character can be qualitatively assessed considering the overall visual impression or attractiveness created by the particular landscape characteristics. In urban settings, these characteristics largely include land use type and density, urban landscaping and design, architecture, topography, and background setting.

## 5.1.2 REGULATORY SETTING

### 5.1.2.1 Federal Regulations

There are no federal regulations concerning aesthetic impacts that are applicable to the Project.

### 5.1.2.2 State Regulations

There are no State regulations concerning aesthetic impacts that are applicable to the Project.

### 5.1.2.3 Local Regulations

#### City of Los Angeles General Plan

The City of Los Angeles General Plan contains the following policies related to aesthetics that are applicable to the Proposed Project:

##### *Conservation Element*

**Objective:** To protect and reinforce natural and scenic vistas as irreplaceable resources and for the aesthetic enjoyment of present and future generations.

**Policy:** Continue to encourage and/or require property owners to develop their properties in a manner that would, to the greatest extent practical, retain significant existing landforms (ridge lines, bluffs, unique geologic features) and unique scenic features (historic, ocean, mountains, unique natural features) and/or make possible public view or other access to unique features or scenic views.

##### *Public Facilities and Services Element*

**Policy 9.40.3:** Develop regulations to ensure quality lighting to minimize or eliminate the adverse impact of lighting due to light pollution, light trespass, and glare for facade lighting, security lighting, and advertising lighting including billboards.

#### Port of Los Angeles Master Plan

**Objective 4:** To assure priority for water and coastal dependent development within the Port while maintaining the coastal zone environment and public views of, and access to, coastal resources.

#### City of Los Angeles Planning and Zoning Code

The City of Los Angeles Planning and Zoning Code contains a lighting-related requirement that is applicable to the Project:

**Section 12.21 A 5(k):** All lights used to illuminate a parking area shall be designed, located, and arranged so as to reflect the light away from any streets and adjacent premises.

## 5.1.3 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

### Visual Character of the Project Site

The Project site is currently disturbed and vacant except for remnants of two abandoned cellular communication towers, a partially paved access road, and surface and buried abandoned oil pipelines and utilities. The Project site consists of a narrow plateau area along I-110 with steep downslopes to the western edge of John S. Gibson Boulevard (SCS, 2017). The Project site is covered with vegetation, including non-native grasses and disturbed coyote brush scrub, and multiple trees on the northwestern portion of the site.

### Visual Character of Adjacent Areas

The existing visual character of the area surrounding the Project site is dominated by the I-110 freeway to the north and west, John S. Gibson Boulevard to the south, and container and terminal storage to the east. Distant views of the Port of Los Angeles (POLA) are visible from the surrounding areas.

## 5.1.4 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines indicates that a project could have a significant effect if it were to:

- AE-1 Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- AE-2 Substantially damage scenic resources, including trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway.
- AE-3 In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings (public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?
- AE-4 Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

The Initial Study established that the Proposed Project would not result in impacts related to Threshold AE-1, AE-2, and AE-4; thus, no further assessment of these impacts is required in this EIR.

## 5.1.5 METHODOLOGY

Aesthetic resources were assessed based on the visual quality of the Project site and surrounding areas and the changes that would occur from Proposed Project implementation. The evaluation of conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality compares the Proposed Project to the City of Los Angeles applicable zoning and policies.

## 5.1.6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

**IMPACT AE-3: IN NON-URBANIZED AREAS, WOULD THE PROJECT SUBSTANTIALLY DEGRADE THE EXISTING VISUAL CHARACTER OR QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC VIEWS OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS? (PUBLIC VIEWS ARE THOSE THAT ARE EXPERIENCED FROM PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE VANTAGE POINTS). IF THE PROJECT IS IN AN URBANIZED AREA, WOULD THE PROJECT CONFLICT WITH APPLICABLE ZONING AND OTHER REGULATIONS GOVERNING SCENIC QUALITY?**

**Less-than-Significant Impact.** The Project site has a POLA Master Plan Land Use designation of Open Space. The Proposed Project would require a POLA Master Plan Amendment to change the Land Use designation from Open Space to Maritime Support for APNs 7440-016-002, 7440-016-003, and 7412-024-007. The Maritime Support designation provides for water-dependent and non-water-dependent operations necessary to support cargo handling and other maritime activities.

APNs 7440-016-001, 7440-016-002, and 7440-016-003 have a City of Los Angeles General Plan designation of General/Bulk Cargo – Non-Hazardous Industrial and Commercial and are zoned Heavy Industrial [Q]M3-1VL, while APN 7412-024-007 has a City of Los Angeles General Plan designation of General/Bulk Cargo – Non-Hazardous Industrial and Commercial and is zoned Light Industrial [Q]M2-1VL (City of Los Angeles, n.d.). The following regulatory standards are applicable to development of the Project site and would ensure the preservation of visual character and quality through architecture, landscaping, and site planning.

**City of Los Angeles Municipal Code**

The following provisions of the City of Los Angeles Municipal Code are intended to minimize adverse aesthetic impacts associated with new development projects and are relevant to the Proposed Project.

**Table 5.1-1: Development Standard Consistency**

| Zone                  | Use                                                                                                                              | Maximum Height | Required Yards (Front, Side Rear)                                                                          | Minimum Area Per Lot/Unit              | Minimum Lot Width                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| M2                    | Light Industrial M1 and MR2 Uses, additional industrial uses, storage yards, animal keeping, enclosed composting, no R Zone Uses | Unlimited      | Front: None.<br>Side: Same as R5 zone for residential uses<br>Rear: None for industrial or commercial uses | None for industrial or commercial uses | None for industrial or commercial uses |
| M3                    | Heavy Industrial M2 Uses, Any Industrial Uses, Nuisance Type Uses 500 ft. from any other Zone, no R Zone Uses                    |                | None                                                                                                       |                                        |                                        |
| Project Applicability | Consistent                                                                                                                       | Consistent     | N/A                                                                                                        | N/A                                    | N/A                                    |

Source: City of Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 12.19 and Section 12.20, (City of Los Angeles, 2023)

As shown in Table 5.1-1, the Proposed Project is consistent with the light and heavy industrial zoning designations for the site. However, the Proposed Project would change the scenic quality of the site from an undeveloped site to a facility for short-term parking of trucks and chassis and related site improvements. A new signal would be installed at the new intersection of John S. Gibson Boulevard and the Proposed Project driveway prior to the start of operations. The Proposed Project would also include installation of a prefabricated guard booth and restroom for use by truck drivers and Proposed Project employees. Additionally, the Proposed Project would include approximately 316,373 square feet of drought tolerant ornamental landscaping that would cover approximately 39 percent of the site. As shown in Figures 5.1-1a through 5.1-1d, public views from I-110 and John S. Gibson Boulevard would be altered with implementation of the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project would include landscaping that would enhance the existing views of the Proposed Project by including trees, shrubs, and wall-covering vines to enhance the scenic quality of the Project site from John S. Gibson Boulevard. The chassis temporarily parked at the Proposed Project would be visible to the public on the I-110. However, the trucks and chassis on site would be similar to the views of the shipping containers within the POLA. Additionally, the layering of landscaping between the Proposed Project and the surrounding roadways would provide visual depth and distance between the roadways and trucks and chassis parked on site, while functioning as a screen to parked trucks and chassis. Therefore, while the Proposed Project would change the visual character of the site, it would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings, and impacts would be less than significant.

### 5.1.7 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The Project would not conflict with applicable design regulations contained in the City of Los Angeles Municipal Code for the M2 and M3 designation. Therefore, the Project has no potential to contribute to cumulatively considerable scenic quality impacts. Moreover, any new development in the surrounding area would be subject to applicable development regulations and design standards imposed by the governing jurisdiction, which would ensure that development incorporates design standards and landscaping to avoid potential adverse effects to local scenic quality. Therefore, aesthetic impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

### 5.1.8 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE BEFORE MITIGATION

The Project would result in a less-than-significant impact regarding Impact AE-3.

### 5.1.9 MITIGATION MEASURES

None required.

### 5.1.10 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

The Project would result in a less-than-significant impact regarding Impact AE-3. No mitigation is required.

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Proposed



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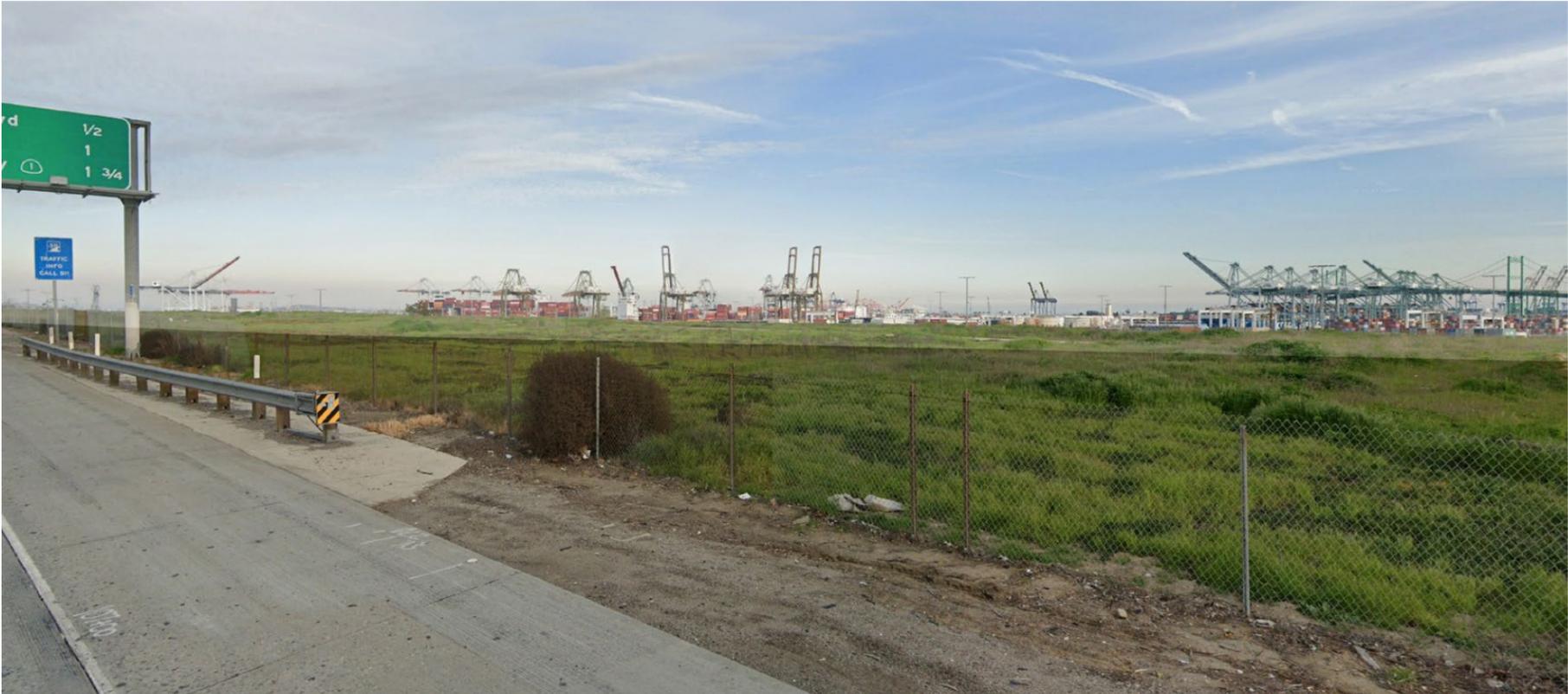


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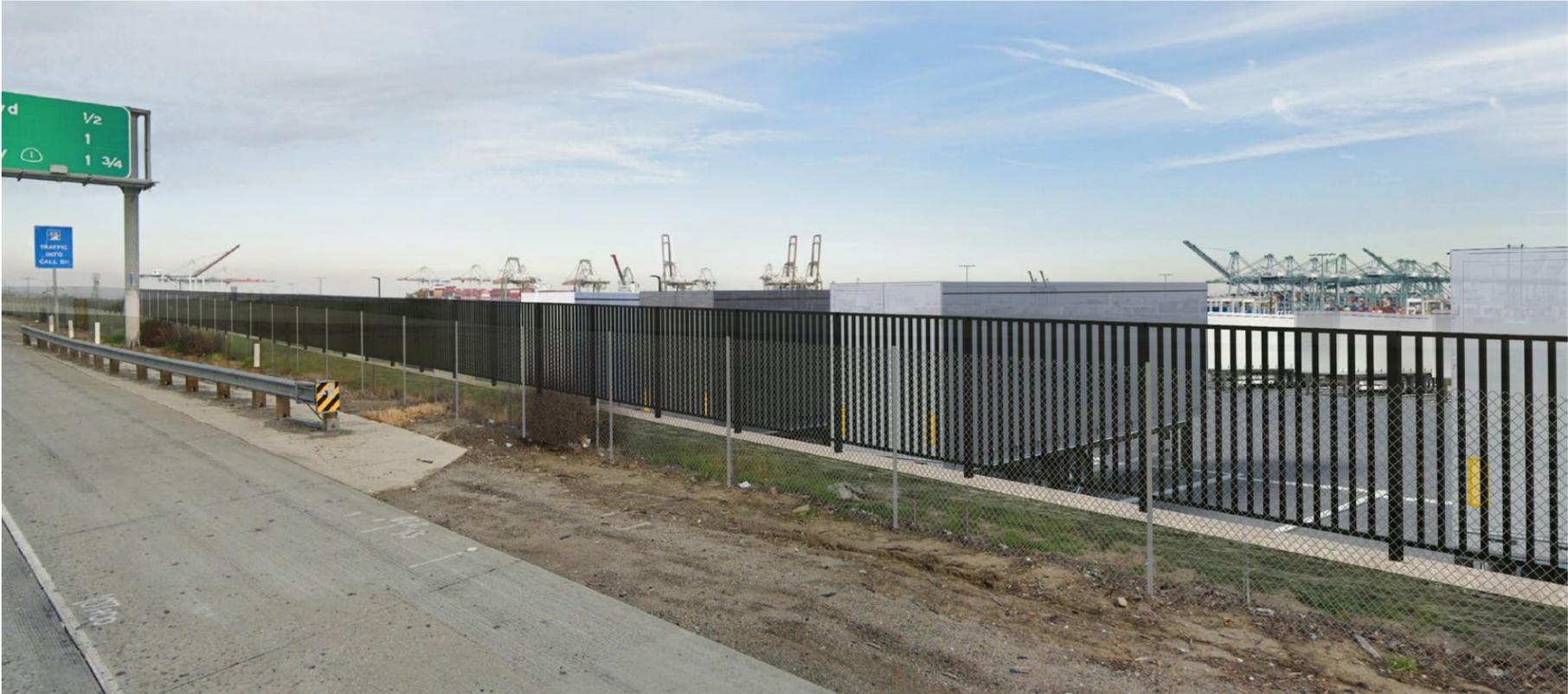


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