
IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS
F. LIGHT AND GLARE
(2) ARTIFICIAL LIGHT AND GLARE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This section of the EIR addresses the potential impacts from nighttime artificial lighting and daytime glare. The analysis of artificial lighting focuses on effects of Proposed Project lighting on the night-time appearance of the Proposed Project site, and on human activity at nearby off-site locations. The potential effects of artificial light on plant and animal species are also identified here, but they are considered in more detail in Section IV.D, Biotic Resources.

The analysis of glare focuses on the potential interference with the performance of off-site activities from light reflecting off of buildings or other Project surfaces. The most common adverse affect from glare is sunlight reflecting into the eyes of drivers along thoroughfares. Impacts may also affect outdoor activities and residential uses.

The analysis addresses the impacts that would occur for the Project as Proposed, for the Project's Equivalency Program and for the Project's secondary impacts that would occur from the implementation of the Project's off-site mitigation measures.

2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

2.1 Regulatory Framework

The City of Los Angeles has incorporated into its Municipal Code several requirements pertaining to lighting within development projects. In addition, the City relies on CEQA mitigation measures for additional lighting standards if necessitated by potential Project impacts. Sections of the Municipal Code which are relevant to the Proposed Project include the following:

- Chapter 9, Article 3, Sec. 93.0117. No exterior light source may cause more than two footcandles (21.5 lx) of lighting intensity or generate direct glare onto exterior glazed windows or glass doors; elevated habitable porch, deck, or balcony; or any ground surface intended for uses such as recreation, barbecue or lawn areas or any other property containing a residential unit or units.

- Chapter 1, Article 2, Sec. 12.21 A5(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 any adjacent premises.
- Chapter 1, Article 7, Sec. 17.08C. Plans for street lighting system shall be submitted to and approved by the Bureau of Street Lighting.
- Division 62, Sec. 91.6205M. No sign shall be arranged and illuminated in such a manner as to produce a light intensity of greater than three footcandles above ambient lighting, as measured at the property line of the nearest residentially zoned property.

2.2 Existing Conditions

2.2.1 Regional Context

The regional area surrounding the Proposed Project site consists of a built environment with a generally suburbanized to urbanized nature. It offers paths of street lighting, and highly lit special uses amidst a backdrop of subdued neighborhood lighting. As such, the region offers a base of substantial ambient lighting conditions.

2.2.2 Topography

The portion of the Proposed Project site that is slated for development, the Project's Urban Development Component, is primarily flat and low-lying, with elevations ranging from approximately 7 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) to 24 feet AMSL. At the south of the Project site, starting at, and extending beyond the Habitat Creation/Restoration Component, the Westchester Bluffs rise above the Proposed Project site at levels which average approximately 140 feet AMSL (approximately 120 feet above the Project site).

2.2.3 Land Uses Within the Proposed Project Site

There are two buildings on the Proposed Project site, Building 22 and Building 45, which remain from the former McDonnell Douglas Helicopter/Hughes Aircraft Company plant. Building 22 is a warehouse used for storage, and Building 45 is used occasionally for filming and other activities. Other small buildings, such as shed, minor storage structures, and construction trailers associated with development of the adjacent Playa Vista First Phase Project also exist in the Former Salvage Yard area of the Proposed Project site. The Proposed Project site is mostly unlit, with some minimal lighting related to the former Plant Site uses.

2.2.4 Light Sensitive Uses Surrounding the Proposed Project

The light sensitive uses surrounding the Proposed Project site are the same as those for shading, as illustrated in Figure 41 on page 590 of Section IV.F(1), Shading. As indicated in the previous section, the Playa Vista First Phase Project immediately west of the Proposed Project site is currently vacant, with recently completed residential buildings located approximately 0.25 mile west of the Proposed Project site. This vacant area is approved for construction of First Phase residential development. The Playa Vista First Phase area to the east of the Proposed Project site includes the former Hughes Plant site which exhibits minimal lighting. This area is approved for office and commercial uses, including entertainment, media and technology uses. Most of the potentially sensitive uses in the surrounding area are somewhat isolated from the Proposed Project site through distance and/or elevation. The only sensitive uses identified in close proximity are the apartment units along Jefferson Boulevard west of Centinela Avenue, and residential units along the top of the bluffs. The other uses around the Proposed Project site, which include light industrial and commercial activities, would not be considered particularly light sensitive, but could still be adversely affected by light or glare shining directly onto their property. Travelers along Jefferson Boulevard, adjacent to the Project site, could also be affected by lighting from artificial and/or reflected sources.

The existing lighting characteristics adjacent to the Proposed Project are consistent with those expected of the uses present: soft lighting, predominated by street lighting in residential and light industrial areas; and brighter lighting in commercial areas with well lit parking areas, buildings and signage.

3.0 IMPACT ANALYSIS

3.1 Methodology

The analysis identifies the uses and types of lighting expected to occur within the Proposed Project, and the expected building materials. It then determines whether such lighting and building materials might contribute to adverse light and/or glare impacts in surrounding areas. Finally, it identifies measures for mitigating potential impacts.

3.2 Significance Thresholds

According to the City of Los Angeles Draft CEQA Thresholds Guide (1998, p.L.1-3), the determination of significance shall be made on a case-by-case basis, considering the following factors:

- 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.

Based on these factors, the Proposed Project would have a significant impact on nighttime lighting, if:

- If Project lighting would substantially alter the character of off-site areas surrounding the Project.
- If Project lighting would interfere with the performance of an off-site activity.
- If reflective light would interfere with the performance of an off-site activity.

3.3 Project Design Features

The Proposed Project would be required to comply with existing regulations regarding artificial lighting. The Proposed Project includes no additional Project Design Features that would mitigate impacts.

3.4 Project Impacts

The Draft Los Angeles CEQA Thresholds Guide (Guide) identifies two factors to be used for determining the significance of a project's impacts on artificial lighting. Both factors identify components that would contribute to an adverse lighting effect, and have been integrated into the first two significance thresholds. The Guide does not address impacts from artificial lighting. Therefore, a threshold was created that parallels the second threshold for nighttime lighting.

3.4.1 Impacts from Artificial Lighting

As the Proposed Project site is surrounded with urban/suburban development containing typical nighttime lighting, and is being further lit with Playa Vista First Phase development, the Proposed Project would not alter the general ambient lighting characteristics of off-site neighborhoods. However, Project lighting would cause an infill of development within a currently vacant area. The impacts of this alteration would be most notably experienced from Jefferson Boulevard adjacent to the Proposed Project site. Impacts could also be noticed from locations along the top of the Westchester Bluffs, but they would not alter the predominant nightscape scene of the city from these locations.

Ambient lighting effects along Jefferson Boulevard are dominated by existing Jefferson Boulevard lighting. Development from the Proposed Project would be located atop a slope that faces the roadway, lessening potential lighting impacts. Night-time views from the top of the bluffs would only be noticed by viewers at the bluff edge. Lighting views from this location would be dominated by the existing urban lighting beyond Jefferson Boulevard, and to a lesser extent, Playa Vista First Phase Project lighting. Project lighting would be soft in nature, similar to that associated with similar uses in surrounding areas.

A portion of the uses facing the Proposed Project site along Jefferson Boulevard are light industrial or commercial in nature. These uses illuminate their sites at night, and would not be adversely affected by the Proposed Project. These uses also contribute to the existing baseline conditions surrounding the Project site. Residential units atop the bluffs along the southern edge of the Proposed Project are separated from Project development by both vertical and horizontal distance.

With regard to potential impacts from spot lighting, the City has, for many years, routinely required shielding of outdoor lighting to preclude glare impact to off-site properties. The City has also adopted specific lighting requirements in its Municipal Code to limit adverse impacts from artificial lighting. City code requirements which are applicable to the Proposed Project are presented in Subsection 2.1, above.

The implementation of such requirements will assure that the Project does not significantly affect an off-site population. Mitigation measures are included below to elaborate upon such procedures. Effects of lighting on habitat areas (e.g., the riparian corridor and bluffs) is discussed further in the Biotic Resource Section of the EIR, which also includes a related mitigation measure.

Proposed Project uses along the edge of the site are similar in nature to the uses they face in surrounding areas, Project lighting would be soft in nature and typical of such lighting in other neighborhoods, and the Project is expected to include standard lighting practices that would preclude spot lighting from being directed on off-site areas. In any case, the Proposed Project would be required to meet the City Code requirements. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not substantially alter the lighting character in surrounding communities and would not interfere with the performance of off-site activities. Impacts would be less than significant.

3.4.2 Impacts from Glare

Development associated with the Project is anticipated to use building materials which are typical of those used throughout the area and which are low-reflective in nature. Further, the view from the area most prone to glare effects, Jefferson Boulevard would be located at lower

elevations than the Proposed Project buildings and would offer views of landscaped areas and slopes. Therefore, adverse impacts are not expected. However, since there are no binding requirements on the Proposed Project to preclude potential impacts from glare, impacts are considered potentially significant, and mitigation measures are recommended below to preclude the generation of such impacts.

3.4.3 Equivalency Program Impacts

The preceding analysis addressed impacts that could occur with increases of artificial lighting on the Project site or reflection from new development. Such effects are a function of the street lighting required, the volume and location of buildings, the lighting needs of the various uses and the choice of building materials.

The exchange of office uses for retail and/or assisted living units would be accomplished within the same building parameters. This exchange in the use of a building would occur at relatively limited locations within the Project site. Furthermore, under the Equivalency Program, there would be no substantial variation in the Project's street configurations. Overall building profiles would be similar to those of the Proposed Project.

All LAMC requirements (as discussed in Subsection 2.1 above) and/or recommended mitigation measures (discussed in Subsection 4.0, Mitigation Measures, below) to minimize lighting impacts would be implemented, as appropriate, under the Equivalency Program. Street lighting, and lighting requirements for the uses under all Equivalency Scenarios would be similar to those of the Proposed Project. Further similar building materials would be used, and the volume and location of buildings would be similar. Implementation of the Equivalency Program would therefore not cause the amounts of artificial lighting or reflected lighting to be greater than that described for the Proposed Project. Lighting under all of the Equivalency Scenarios would not substantially alter the character of off-site areas nor interfere with the performance of off-site activities. As with the Proposed Project, impacts would be less than significant.

3.4.4 Impacts of Off-Site Improvements

Proposed Project development could result in secondary impacts arising from implementation of the Project's mitigation measures, as well as the direct impacts described above. Mitigation measures within Section IV.K.(1), Traffic and Circulation, require physical improvements in transportation facilities at numerous locations including roadway widening at seven locations, as described in Subsection 5.8 of that Section. In addition, as discussed in Section IV.N.(1), Water Consumption, the Proposed Project would require the construction of a water regulator station in the vicinity of Jefferson Boulevard and Mesmer Avenue.

The only potential effects on lighting would occur from the relocation of street lights that would be moved closer to the adjacent uses from the existing locations to accommodate the roadway widenings. Several streetlights would be relocated along the Centinela Corridor and at the intersection of Centinela Avenue and La Tijera Boulevard. One or two streetlights would be relocated at the remaining locations. The relocated lighting would be similar to the currently existing lighting. New light standards would be shielded so that the light source is directed toward the street and sidewalk and away from sensitive uses, consistent with Los Angeles Bureau of Street Maintenance requirements. Accordingly, no adverse lighting impacts are anticipated from the off-site improvements. Therefore, none of the off-site improvements would result in significant impacts, unto themselves; and impacts of the Proposed Project, inclusive of the off-site improvements would be less than significant.

4.0 MITIGATION MEASURES

Mitigation Measures for the Proposed Project and the Equivalency Program

The following mitigation measures protect human population and activity. An additional measure to protect habitat areas is included in Section IV.D, Biotic Resources.

With regard to artificial lighting:

- All outdoor lighting, other than signs, shall be limited to those required for safety, security, highlighting and landscaping.
- Animated building identification signs shall be prohibited. Illuminated residential building signs shall not be permitted above the first level.

With regard to glare:

- The Applicant shall use exterior building materials and façades which eliminate or minimize highly reflective materials. At the time of plan check review for specific development projects, building materials shall be reviewed to assure that they do not exceed the reflectivity of standard building materials. If the Applicant should desire to use more reflective materials in locations isolated from major thoroughfares, adequate analysis must be presented to the Department of Building and Safety to determine that the building, due to location, would not cause glare impacts on motorists or nearby population.

- Direct glare from automobile headlights in parking structures shall be shielded by walls, louvers, landscaping, and/or other similar measures.

5.0 UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

The Proposed Project and its Equivalency Program would add lighting to the Project site that would be noticeable from off-site locations. Such lighting would be similar to lighting in adjoining areas. It would not substantially alter the lighting character of off-site areas surrounding the Project site, and would not be directed off-site in a manner which would interfere with the performance of off-site activity. Furthermore, the Proposed Project, inclusive of the Equivalency Program and off-site improvements, would not be expected to generate off-site reflective glare, so as to interfere with the performance of an off-site activity. Therefore, no significant impacts are expected after mitigation.

6.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The only Related Project in the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Project is Related Project 40, the Playa Vista First Phase Project. Existing and future development within the First Phase Project site will add additional nighttime lighting to the community. As is the case with the Proposed Project, lighting would be soft in nature, would be similar to lighting in surrounding neighborhoods and would not cause direct lighting on off-site adjacent uses.

The one major related project that might generate notable off-site lighting is the LAX Master Plan Project. As indicated, in the LAX Draft EIS/EIR, the project would not generate significant off-site lighting impacts on adjacent properties, that are located approximately 1.75 miles south of the Proposed Project.²⁴⁷ Therefore, that Project would not contribute to a cumulative impact with the Proposed Project. Otherwise, related projects in the larger region consist of smaller in-fill development. The additional lighting associated with these projects would be similar to the existing lighting in the areas where the developments occur and would not substantially alter the character of those areas. The lighting would blend with the existing suburban-urban lighting base which occurs in the area. The related projects would be subject to regulations which require the shielding of outdoor lighting. These projects would cause or not cause lighting impacts on their adjacent uses independently of development from the Proposed Project.

²⁴⁷ *Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report, January 2001, California State Clearinghouse, No: 1997061047.*

Lighting from the Proposed Project, in conjunction with lighting associated with related projects, would contribute to the general level of ambient lighting surrounding the Project site. However, existing lighting already establishes a suburban-to-urban level of lighting condition baseline, and new sources would not significantly alter the nighttime appearance of the surrounding area. The Proposed Project would not create nighttime glare that would interfere with off-site activities, and there are no related projects that would contribute with the Proposed Project to an off-site interference of an activity. Cumulative impacts regarding nighttime illumination, inclusive of the Proposed Project, its Equivalency Program, and its off-site improvements, would be less than significant.

Glare impacts occur on a project-by-project basis, and when they occur they are considered significant without respect to cumulative effect. The Proposed Project is not expected to create daytime glare that would interfere with the performance of off-site activities, and there are no related projects that would contribute with the Proposed Project to such an effect. Therefore, no significant cumulative impacts are anticipated from glare, inclusive of the Proposed Project, its Equivalency Program, and its off-site improvements.