

4.1 AESTHETICS

4.1.1 Introduction and Methodology

This section addresses the components of the project which may produce visual impacts or affect visual character upon implementation. The visual character analysis focuses on the ultimate building height, mass and design treatment that may permanently impact views within the project area.

Existing visual conditions were compiled through site visits and review of aerial photographs. Public viewpoints that are exposed to the proposed project site were identified and the existing visual character summarized. Analysis of impacts is based on an assessment of how the view would change in addition to an assessment of the project's compliance with viewshed and other aesthetic policies in relevant City planning documents.

4.1.2 Existing Conditions

On Site

The aesthetic qualities of the existing site are primarily derived from its proximity to the coast and surrounding coastal environment. The EPS site is industrial in nature and is noted as a blighted condition within the South Carlsbad Coastal Redevelopment Plan Adoption Program Environmental Impact Report, primarily for its aesthetic impacts. The desalination plant site is dominated by the existing EPS facility and seven fuel storage tanks. The site is surrounded by scenic resources, including the Pacific Ocean, Agua Hedionda Lagoon, beaches and low coastal bluffs. The EPS and desalination plant sites are visible from both north and southbound Carlsbad Boulevard as well as from the established residential area north of the lagoon; passenger rail traffic on the AT&SF/North County Transit District (NCTD) line to the east has partially screened views of both sites. Both Carlsbad Boulevard and the railroad corridor are included in the City of Carlsbad's Scenic Corridor Guidelines. The section of Carlsbad Boulevard adjacent to the EPS is designated as a "Community Theme Corridor" due to its visual access to beaches, the ocean, and the lagoon.

The Agua Hedionda Land Use Plan, which is part of the Agua Hedionda LCP, identifies special vista points and viewing areas to be preserved. The proposed desalination plant site does not fall within any of the viewsheds originating from these vista points (Agua Hedionda LCP, Exhibit K). Mature landscaping and a natural bluff provide visual screening on the east and northeast sides. Vegetation provides partial screening on the north and west sides, with mature tree

canopy extending above the storage tanks. The view from the south of the proposed plant is blocked by the existing EPS facility.

Nighttime illumination within the EPS is minimal and is provided for security purposes.

Off Site

The relevant existing setting for offsite facilities includes the City of Oceanside Corporation Yard located on Oceanside Boulevard, because this is the location for the offsite pump station which is the only offsite, above-ground feature of the project. The Oceanside Corporation Yard consists of uses that are industrial in character, and includes the storage of maintenance equipment and supplies and administrative offices.

4.1.3 Significance Criteria

Appendix G of the CEQA guidelines, which has been adopted by the City of Carlsbad for purposes of complying with CEQA, lists the following as criteria for determining whether a significant impact to aesthetics would occur:

- a) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
- b) Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway?
- c) Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?
- d) Would the project create a new source of substantial light and glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

The significance of aesthetic impacts has been evaluated by analyzing potential project effects from a number of perspectives, including construction-related visual disruption, observer position and changes to the existing visual character of the area.

4.1.4 Impacts

On Site Facilities

Short-term Impacts: Demolition of the existing storage tank and construction of the new facility would cause temporary aesthetic impacts. The construction staging area could be placed to the north and south of the proposed project site in an existing maintenance area which would reduce the construction-related aesthetic impacts of equipment storage, materials, and debris. Because these impacts are short-term in nature, and because they affect a limited portion of the overall PDP site, they are not considered to have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, nor would they substantially damage scenic resources. Overall, construction activities would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings, and are therefore not considered significant.

Long-term Impacts: The project would be constructed on the existing site of the most southerly storage tank, identified as Tank #3, with the other two tanks remaining in place. Visual simulations of the proposed facility are provided in *Figures 4.1-1 through 4.1-5*. The building would be approximately 44,552 square-feet, and designed to have a flat roof which would reach a maximum of thirty-seven (35) feet above existing grade at its highest point. This is in keeping with the scale of the adjacent tanks. The architectural treatment and materials used on the exterior of the building include cast-in-place concrete, and extensive use of metal and translucent panels, glazing, and steel and metal accents. The use of materials and architectural details provides a degree of visual interest so the building is not solely utilitarian in character. The east side of the facility would have exterior chemical storage tanks for use in the desalination process that would be enclosed by metal screen panels. As proposed, the project is not considered to have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, or a substantially damaging effect on scenic resources, because the proposed structure would represent a visual enhancement over what is currently located on the site. However, exposure of certain features of the facilities, such as chemical storage tanks could potentially result in degradation of the visual character or quality of the site and represents a potentially significant impact. Mitigation measures are proposed to ensure that the visual screening techniques that are proposed for these features of the project are implemented in a manner acceptable to the City of Carlsbad.

To the extent practical, the mature vegetation that is currently providing partial screening of the tank area from Carlsbad Boulevard will be preserved in place. However, should the final grading plan require removal of any of the existing vegetation, it will be replaced on a 2:1 basis with 15 gallon of the same or similar species. On the east side of the proposed desalination plant, an existing access road is proposed to be widened to twenty (20) feet, which may necessitate the removal of some of the mature eucalyptus trees that line the AT&SF/NCTD right-of-way. The

Figure 4.1-1

Figure 4.1-2

Figure 4.1-3

Figure 4.1-4

Figure 4.1-5

site grading plan indicates replacing any removed trees on a 2:1 basis with 15-gallon torrey pines (*Pinus torreyana*) or similar species. Since the existing vegetative screening of the site may be affected by activities necessary for project construction, a potentially significant impact to scenic resources could result. Therefore, mitigation measures have been included to provide for appropriate replacement of any trees that are removed as a result of construction.

The City's Scenic Corridor Guidelines (adopted July 1, 1988) provide goals and suggested treatment for right-of-way within the corridors. The project site is visually within the Carlsbad Boulevard Theme Corridor, however the guidelines are directed towards property directly adjacent to the roadway, bluffs and beaches. One applicable goal is to preserve the natural quality of the lagoon areas by providing little, if any additional landscaping in those areas of the corridor adjacent to the lagoon. This precludes the use of extensive street trees and roadside plantings for additional screening. Installation of any landscaping in conjunction with construction of a screening wall along the Carlsbad Boulevard frontage of the EPS and widening of Carlsbad Boulevard from Cannon Road to near the southern boundary of the EPS will need to be consistent with Scenic Corridor Guidelines.

As the project site is adjacent to the NCTD railroad corridor, it also would be subject to the City's Scenic Corridor Guidelines for this corridor. Applicable guidelines include:

- A predominant theme tree should be encouraged on adjacent properties. The suggested tree is Torrey Pine.
- Selective berming and landscaping can be encouraged to improve aesthetics and control noise.

Buildings adjacent to the railroad right-of-way shall be architecturally articulated to vary building elevations and height to maintain a pleasant building façade that would be visible along the railroad right-of-way.

As noted above, the exterior design of the desalination plant, proposed screening of chemical storage tanks, and replacement landscaping along the widened access roadway would provide screening of visual impacts, which meets the intent of the Scenic Corridor Guidelines. Without these measures, potential impacts related to conformance with the guidelines could result. The mitigation measures outlined below will mitigate the visual impact to a less than significant level and will provide conformance with the applicable guidelines.

Exterior nighttime lighting of the proposed desalination plant will likely exceed current levels in use in the tank area, creating a new source of light. The primary light sources would be on and around the building, with the pretreatment area that is closest to the lagoon receiving minimal lighting. Although the new sources of light are not considered to be substantial, because of the sensitive nature of the adjacent lagoon habitats, control of lighting features is necessary to avoid potential impacts to those habitats. Therefore, mitigation measures to address these features are provided. With the application of these measures, it is not anticipated that the project lighting would result in an intrusion into the surrounding area or a disruption to nighttime views. The surface coatings and materials used on the exterior of the new building and structures is not expected to result in substantial glare impacts, however, language is included in the mitigation measures to ensure that reflective glass is not used in the final design.

Off Site Facilities

Short-term Impacts: Construction of the off site water delivery pipelines and pump station would cause temporary aesthetic impacts, including equipment storage, materials, soil stockpiling and debris that are exposed to public views. The use of standard construction measures such as fencing and screening would be utilized to a limited extent to screen construction areas. Because these impacts are short-term in nature, and because they affect a limited area, they are not considered to have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, nor would they substantially damage scenic resources. Construction activities would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the surrounding areas, and are therefore not considered significant.

Long-term Impacts: The proposed pipelines will not have long-term aesthetic impacts as they will be placed underground and will not be exposed to public view. The proposed pump station will be visible after construction. The pump station would be similar in height and overall dimensions of a one-story, single-family home, occupying a footprint area of approximately 2,000 square feet.

4.1.5 Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures are recommended to mitigate potential aesthetic impacts of the desalination plant:

- 4.1-1** Replacement planting for trees that are removed along the railroad corridor shall be provided to screen views from the rail line towards the facility. Tree or other plant species, quantity, and size shall be in keeping with the adopted City of Carlsbad Scenic Corridor Guidelines, City Landscape Manual, and the vegetative character of

- the Agua Hedionda Lagoon ~~and to the extent that the species are compatible with existing vegetation.~~ Planting shall be sufficient to provide screening ~~from the ground up~~ when mature. Verification of the adequacy of the proposed plantings will occur through City review and approval of the project's landscape plan. The project landscape plan shall also be sent to the North County Transit District for review and comment to ensure that replacement planting poses no potential rail hazards.
- 4.1-2** Desalination Plan eExterior mechanical equipment and ~~plant~~ facilities, including tanks, heating, air conditioning, refrigeration equipment, plumbing lines, duct work and transformers, shall be screened from view on all sides visible to the public. The design and material used for screening shall be architecturally compatible with the building.
- 4.1-3** To the extent practical, the existing mature landscape on the slope facing Carlsbad Boulevard adjacent to the ~~project~~ desalination plant site shall remain in place and be protected from construction impacts through the use of fencing and signage. Replacement planting for trees and shrubs that are removed along the slope facing Carlsbad Blvd. shall be provided to screen views from Carlsbad Blvd. towards the facility. Tree or other plant species, quantity, and size shall be in keeping with the adopted City of Carlsbad Scenic Corridor Guidelines, City Landscape Manual, the vegetative character of the Agua Hedionda Lagoon area and shall be sufficient to provide screening from the ground up when mature. Verification of the adequacy of the proposed plantings will occur through City review and approval of the project's landscape plan.
- 4.1-4** Construction staging areas within the PDP area shall be screened from public view or located in an area away from direct public view. Plans showing the staging area locations and screening shall be submitted to the Planning director or his/her designee for review and approval.
- 4.1-5** Exterior lighting for the desalination facilities shall serve the purpose of operations, security and safety only. The applicant shall submit for approval a lighting plan for the proposed facilities prior to building permit issuance. The lighting plan shall demonstrate that project lighting is shielded from surrounding areas, and that only the minimum amount of lighting required for safety purposes is provided to avoid adverse effects on surrounding areas. In general, lighting fixtures shall be shielded downward and away from the adjacent Agua Hedionda Lagoon and adjacent properties. Construction of the desalination plant and related facilities and improvements shall be in conformance with the approved plan.

4.1-6 Building elevations, including those visible from the NCTD railroad, shall substantially conform to ~~approved plans~~plans approved for the desalination plant pursuant to PDP 0002.

4.1.6 Level of Significance After Mitigation/Residual Impact

No significant aesthetic impacts are anticipated with incorporation of the recommended mitigation measures.