

## **4.1 AESTHETICS**

This chapter discusses the existing aesthetic character of the Project site and its surroundings, and evaluates the potential impacts to aesthetics associated with development of the Project. The following evaluation assesses visual character, scenic vistas, scenic highways, and light and glare.

### **4.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

#### **4.1.1.1 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

This section summarizes key State and City regulations and programs related to aesthetics at the Project site. There are no federal regulations pertaining to aesthetics that apply to the Project.

#### **State Regulations**

The California Scenic Highways Program, maintained by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), designates scenic highways and routes with the intention of protecting and enhancing the scenic beauty of the highways, routes, and adjacent corridors. Designation ensures that new development projects along recognized scenic corridors are designed to maintain the route's scenic potential. There are three eligible State scenic highways within the City of Daly City, although none are officially designated; Skyline Boulevard (State Route (SR) 35), Cabrillo Highway (SR 1), and Junipero Serra (Interstate 280 (I-280)). Some of the scenic potential along these corridors are related to the views of the coast and San Bruno Mountain.

#### **Local Regulations**

##### *City of Daly City 2030 General Plan*

The City of Daly City 2030 General Plan (2030 General Plan), adopted on March 25, 2013, includes a Visual Quality section under the Resources Management Element. General Plan policies and tasks relevant to the Project with regards to aesthetics are listed below in Table 4.1-1.

##### *City of Daly City Municipal Code*

Chapter 17.45, Design Review, of the Daly City Municipal Code establishes a design review committee for the purpose of investigating the design, layout, and other features of proposed development to ensure consistency with the character of the adjacent properties or areas.

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**TABLE 4.1-1 DALY CITY 2030 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES AND TASKS RELEVANT TO AESTHETICS**

Policy/Task Number	Policy / Task
Task CE – 20.7	As a part of all new development, require, where appropriate, the provision of pedestrian-oriented signs, pedestrian-scaled lighting, benches, and other street furniture so as to make non-motorized forms of travel comfortable and attractive alternatives to the automobile. Where necessary in new development, the City may require additional sidewalk and/or right-of-way width to accommodate these amenities.
Policy RME-15	Require public visual access easements in new developments along the coastline.
Policy LU-16	Regulate of the size, quantity, and location of signs to maintain and enhance the visual appearance of Daly City.
Policy RME-20	Recognize the physical differences between different parts of the City and regulate land uses within these areas accordingly.
Task RME-20.4	Incorporate design features in new development that reflect the character of the neighborhood, to ensure that new construction is compatible with existing development.
Policy LU-17	Ensure that private development is responsible for providing any on-or off-site improvements related to and/or mitigating the impacts it causes.

Source: City of Daly City, Daly City 2030 General Plan, adopted March 25, 2013.

### 4.1.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The following provides a general description of the existing urban visual character of the Project site and its immediate surroundings.

#### Visual Character

The Project site is located in a highly urbanized setting in the City of Daly City. Surrounded by roadways and major highways, the area has an auto-oriented character, with many way finding and storefront signs, minimal landscaping, expansive parking lots, and older one- and two-story commercial buildings, as shown in Figure 4.1-1a. The main portion of the Shopping Center is located toward the west end of the Project site, and has a mix of older design elements that are characterized by expansive non-descript concrete facades, flat rooftops, and storefronts that lack windows and landscaping (e.g. Macy’s, H & M, JC Penney). There are newer buildings with design elements that include facades with greater depth and contrasting and complimentary colors of stucco, as wells as varying building heights, accent lighting, and landscaping at building entrances (e.g. Dicks Sporting Goods, Target, Rubios).

The Project site is currently developed with one- and two-story buildings, characterized by large, non-descript facades of primarily neutral tones. Newer buildings are constructed with brick and stone facades that reflect a modern architectural style (as shown in Figure 4.14-b). Wide cement sidewalks containing intermittent planters border several storefronts. As shown in Figure 4.1-1c, free-standing buildings are also located in the southeast and northeast corners of the Project site away from the main portion of the Shopping Center.

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**A.** Project site from Serramonte Boulevard and Loop Road



**B.** View of Rubios and Jamba Juice east of Target



**C.** View of free standing buildings in north corner of Project site



**D.** Southwest corner of Project site

Source: PlaceWorks, 2015.

Figure 4.1-1  
Visual Character of the Site and Surroundings

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Landscaping is concentrated near entrances to parking lots off Serramonte Boulevard and Callan Boulevard, and include a mixture of ornamental trees, shrubs, ornamental grasses, and turf. Parking lots contain minimal landscaping in medians that include small shrubs and ornamental trees, as well as lighting poles throughout. A row of eucalyptus trees serve as a buffer between the southwest parking lot and Serramonte Boulevard. The southwest portion of the Project site is characterized by steep slopes and scattered trees that provide a visual buffer between residential buildings across Callan Boulevard and the Shopping Center, as shown in Figure 4.1-1d.

### *Views of the Project Site*

The view north from the corner of Serramonte Boulevard and the entrance to Serramonte Center Loop Road, as shown in Figure 4.1-2a, shows the main entrance to the Shopping Center which includes an expansive surface parking lot, along with moderately spaced lighting fixtures, ornamental trees, and a pylon sign on the north end of the Project site. Views of the Project site, looking west from the access point at the four way intersection at Serramonte Boulevard and Serramonte Center Loop Road, include sights of the shopping center, way finding signs, the main Shopping Center sign, landscaping, and Wells Fargo bank. Additionally, views of the mature eucalyptus and pine trees lining the western boundary of the Project site can be seen in the distance, as shown in Figure 4.1-2b.

From a vantage point along Callan Boulevard to the north of the Project site, the expansive parking lot with minimal landscaping can be seen along with moderately spaced lighting fixtures. Beyond the existing Macy's and H & M buildings, a pylon sign located in the northwest corner of the parking lot is visible in the distance (as shown in Figure 4.1-2c).

Views from the northwestern corner of the existing Macy's building at the Callan Boulevard driveway are shown in Figure 4.1-1c. This figure shows the freestanding Firestone Tire building, sidewalks containing ornamental trees and shrubs, and existing Pine trees that separate the Project site from Callan Boulevard.

As shown in Figure 4.1-2d, views of the Project site along Serramonte Boulevard in the southwest portion of the Project site are blocked by a line of eucalyptus and cypress trees along with cyclone fencing, limiting access to the Project site.

### *Views from the Project Site*

From a vantage point looking south from the entrance to the Target building, a heavily landscaped entry can be viewed. A grouping of pine, cypress, and eucalyptus trees can be seen on the south side of the signalized intersection providing a visual barrier between Serramonte Boulevard and the Chinese Cemetery and single-family residential units to the south (as shown in Figure 4.1-3a).

Looking west from Loop Road and the Serramonte Boulevard entry (see Figure 4.1-3b), views of several two-story multi-family apartment buildings can be seen in the distance beyond the southwestern portion of the Project site. To the east of Callan Boulevard is a steep hillside covered with cypress trees that provide screening from the Project site.

**AESTHETICS**



**A.** View north from Serramonte Boulevard and Loop Road



**B.** View west from Serramonte Boulevard and Loop Road



**C.** Southeast View from Callan Boulevard



**D.** Southwest corner of Project site from Serramonte Boulevard

Source: PlaceWorks, 2015.

Figure 4.1-2  
Views of the Project Site

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Looking south across the four-way intersection at Serramonte Boulevard and Gellert Boulevard, from the southern border of the Project site, a single-story strip mall can be seen. Design elements include those typical of a commercial corridor accommodating a wide variety of visitor serving needs, including a fast food establishment, a single-story department store, and a fuel station (see Figure 4.1-3c).

Views to the northeast consist of views of the rolling hillside and San Bruno Mountain. The hillside is largely undeveloped except for a collection of single-family housing units that are clustered on the crest of the hillside to the north of San Bruno Mountain. These buildings can be characterized a multi-storied condominiums with windows and balconies that face the project site. A row of medium-sized ornamental trees provide screening between Interstate 280 (I-280) and the Project site (as shown in Figure 4.1-3d).

## Scenic Resources

The 2030 General Plan identifies scenic views and corridors, landmarks, and gateways to be preserved and protected. As described in the Resource Management Element of the 2030 General Plan, the views from Daly City to the coastline, surrounding scenic corridors, and San Bruno Mountain are integral to the City's identity, sense of place, and character. Although access to the coastline is extremely limited, the upper portions of the bluffs provide visual access. Views of the coastline are not visible from Project site. Scenic corridors, as described below, are intended to protect and enhance the scenic beauty of the highways, routes, and adjacent corridors. Designation of these corridors ensures that new development projects along recognized scenic corridors are designed to maintain the corridor's scenic potential.

### *San Bruno Mountain*

San Bruno Mountain reaches approximately 1,000 feet in elevation and is visible from various locations throughout the City, including the Project site. Given the flat nature and low building heights on the Project site, views of San Bruno Mountain can be seen from portions of the Project site across I-280 to the east. The most expansive views of San Bruno Mountain are from the southwestern portion of the Project site and the areas along Serramonte Boulevard and Callan Boulevard adjacent to the Project Site.

### *Scenic Corridors*

The General Plan does not identify any State or County designated scenic highways located in Daly City. However, several roadways have been recognized as having scenic quality.<sup>1</sup> The 2030 General Plan identifies John Daly and Lake Merced Boulevard as scenic corridors, however, these roadways are not located within the vicinity of the Project site. There are three eligible State scenic highways within the City of Daly City, though none are officially designated. These highways include Skyline Boulevard (SR 35), Cabrillo Highway (SR 1), and Junipero Serra (I-280). Scenic potential along these corridors are related to the views of the coast and San Bruno Mountain. I-280 is located directly to the north of the Project site and provides views of San Bruno Mountain. State Route 1 runs adjacent to the Project site to the west and provides views of the Project site and San Bruno Mountain.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Daly City, Daly City 2030 General Plan, page 189.

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**A.** View south of Project site from Target



**B.** View west from Serramonte Boulevard and Loop Road



**C.** View south of Project site from Serramonte Boulevard and Loop Road



**D.** View northeast from Project site

Source: PlaceWorks, 2015.

Figure 4.1-3  
Views from the Project Site

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### *Light and Glare*

Light pollution refers to all forms of unwanted light in the night sky, including glare, light trespass, sky glow, and over-lighting. Excessive light and glare can be visually disruptive to humans and nocturnal animal species, and often reflects an unnecessarily high level of energy consumption. Light pollution has the potential to become an issue of increasing concern as new development contributes additional outdoor lighting installed for safety and other reasons. The City is primarily built out and the light and glare that exists within the City is typical of an urban setting. The light and glare sources presently within the City are associated with residential and commercial land uses.

### 4.1.2 STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Project would result in a significant visual quality impact if it would:

1. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
2. Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.
3. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
4. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

### 4.1.3 IMPACT DISCUSSION

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**AES-1                    The Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.**

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The Resource Management Element of the 2030 General Plan identifies natural scenic vistas available to Daly City residents. These include San Bruno Mountain and the Coastline.<sup>2</sup> The Project site is located approximately one mile east of the Pacific Ocean and views of the coastline are not provided at the Project site.

The Project would redevelop or replace existing buildings on the Project site and build new structures to a maximum height of approximately 35 feet along the site periphery, approximately 60 feet in the northern portion of the Project site, and approximately 70 feet in the central portion of the Shopping Center. Additionally, a four-story above-ground parking garage would be constructed on the northwestern side of the Project site. However, since the Project site is largely developed, the views from various vantage points are already obstructed by buildings and mature trees and vegetation. Although new buildings could affect far field views of San Bruno Mountain when viewed from locations within the Project site, expansive views of San Bruno Mountain would still be available from, and when looking across, the Project site. Therefore, due to the Project site's topography, location, and height requirements of buildings, the Project would not result in a substantial adverse effect on views of San Bruno Mountain.

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<sup>2</sup> City of Daly City, 2013, Daly City 2030 General Plan, page 189.

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In accordance with Municipal Code, Chapter 17.45, Design Review, the Project would be required to conform with specific design criteria which requires applicants to consider the character, scale and quality of the design, the architectural relationship with the site and other buildings, building materials, colors, screening of exterior appurtenances, and exterior lighting and signing and similar elements would be incorporated in order to insure the compatibility of the development with its design concept and the character of other adjacent buildings. Additionally, general landscape considerations of Chapter 17.41, Landscaping, must be adhered to in order to insure visual relief, complement buildings and structures, and provide an attractive environment for the enjoyment of the public. Given that the Project would be subject to the City’s Design Review process, in accordance with Chapters 17.41 and 17.45 of the Municipal Code, to minimize the effects of increased building heights on existing views of San Bruno Mountain, compliance with the City’s Design Review process would ensure that future development permitted under the Project would result in a less-than-significant impact to scenic vistas.

**Applicable Regulations:**

- Daly City 2030 General Plan, Resource Management Element
- Daly City Municipal Code, Chapter 17.45 Design Review

**Significance Before Mitigation:** Less than significant.

**AES-2                    The Project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.**

SR 1 and I-280 are designated as “eligible” State scenic highways, meaning that they are eligible for designation as a State scenic highway but are not officially designated.<sup>3</sup> The Project would include reconfiguring and renovating existing structures, and construction of freestanding buildings, including a new hotel at the existing Shopping Center. There are no designated scenic highways adjacent to the Project site and proposed retail and hotel uses would not substantially damage scenic resources within a state scenic highway. Therefore, the Project would have *no impact* on a scenic highway.

**Applicable Regulations:**

- Daly City 2030 General Plan, Resource Management Element
- Daly City Municipal Code, Chapter 17.45 Design Review

**Significance Before Mitigation:** Less than significant.

**AES-3                    The Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.**

Development allowed by the Project would degrade the visual character of the Project site and its surroundings if the form and appearance of new development would deteriorate the quality of the existing setting. The Project site is largely

<sup>3</sup> Department of Transportation, California Scenic Highway Mapping System, [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic\\_highways/index.htm](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/index.htm), accessed on January 13, 2015.

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comprised of commercial and retail uses in buildings that are not architecturally notable. While, development of the Project would redevelop or replace existing buildings on the Project site and build new structures, development would remain consistent with the overall urban character of the existing shopping center. Although, the Project would largely maintain the layout of the existing site, new free-standing buildings would be constructed in the southwestern, southeastern and northern portions of the site, as well as the replacement of surface parking with new buildings and a parking garage. Buildings on isolated pads would be designed to suit the requirements of specific tenants. Additionally, development attached to the existing mall would be designed to blend in with the existing building and with a new color scheme that would be applied to the entire mall. Further, buildings would be designed to suit the requirements of specific tenants. However, these changes would not represent a degradation of the site's visual character, and would not affect the character of the surrounding area. Therefore, the impact would be *less than significant*.

### Applicable Regulations:

- Daly City 2030 General Plan, Resource Management Element
- Daly City Municipal Code, Chapter 17.45 Design Review

**Significance Before Mitigation:** Less than significant.

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<b>AES-4</b>	<b>The Project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.</b>
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This discussion analyzes the light and glare impacts of the Project compared to existing conditions.

## Light

The Project would result in increased light from signage, safety lighting, streetlights, and traffic on major arterials and freeways. The Project site is currently developed with commercial and retail land uses within a dense urbanized area that are currently lighted. Although future development under the Project would involve additional nighttime lighting above existing conditions at the Project Site, new development would not add new sources of light pollution to the extent that it would adversely affect nighttime views. The lighting needs of the Project would vary according to the type and intensity of use, and could include lighting sources related to storefront signage, interior lighting, and outdoor accessory lighting. The Project would include a hotel, which would involve 24-hour activity. In addition, varying illumination levels would be developed that address the particular needs of outdoor spaces and activities, such as safety, security, vehicular and pedestrian movement, retailing, and signage. Further, the Project would be required to comply with the Design Review process outlined in the Municipal Code, which requires that general architectural considerations such as exterior lighting are compatible with design and character of adjacent or neighboring properties.

## Glare

The Project would include a four-story parking garage that would decrease the number of surface parking spaces on the Project site, thereby reducing the amount of potential glare on the Project site from the windshields of parked cars. Additionally, with development of the Project, new way finding and business related signage would be installed, which

could be potential sources of glare. However, these signs must comply with Municipal Code Section 17.32.200, Permitted signs in commercial and industrial districts, which states that a sign must be in harmony with the premises on which it is to be located and with other properties in the vicinity. Additionally, signs must conform to specific design criteria that consider shape, letter type, material, type of color, and type of illumination. Compliance with existing standards would result in a *less-than-significant* impact to day or nighttime views in the area from glare.

**Applicable Regulations:**

- Daly City 2030 General Plan, Resource Management Element
- Daly City Municipal Code, Chapter 17.45 Design Review
- Daly City Municipal Code, Chapter 17.32 Signs

**Significance Before Mitigation:** Less than significant.

## 4.1.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

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**AES-5                    The Project, in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects, would result in less than significant cumulative impacts with respect to aesthetics.**

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In addition to the Project, future growth would also occur in the City of Daly City under the General Plan. Development under the General Plan would have a potential to result in aesthetic impacts that, considered with the impacts of the Project could result in cumulative impacts. However, future development under the General Plan would be subject to design reviews and Municipal Code requirements regulating light, glare, building height, and other issues pertaining to visual quality. Therefore, the Project would result in a *less- than-significant* cumulative impact in relation to aesthetics.

**Applicable Regulations:**

- Daly City 2030 General Plan, Resource Management Element
- Daly City Municipal Code
- Daly City Municipal Code, Chapter 17.45 Design Review
- Daly City Municipal Code, Chapter 17.32 Signs

**Significance Before Mitigation:** Less than significant.

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