

CHAPTER IV

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

A. AESTHETICS

INTRODUCTION

This section discusses existing visual conditions on the project site and in the vicinity, and analyzes the potential for the project to affect those conditions. Information for the discussion and subsequent analysis was drawn from site visits and project plans. The physical characteristics of the site and surrounding areas are discussed briefly. For a more detailed description of the land uses that are mentioned below, refer to the Initial Study (see Appendix A).

This section also describes the visual context of the project site and identifies relevant policies from the Oakland General Plan Land Use and Transportation Element and Open Space, Conservation and Recreation Element.

Four computer-generated visual simulations illustrating “before” and “after” visual conditions from representative public vantage points near the proposed project site, are presented as part of this analysis. The locations of the visual simulation vantage points were selected in consultation with City staff. Digitized photographs and computer modeling and rendering techniques were utilized to prepare the simulation images, which are based on project drawings provided by the project architect.

SETTING

VISUAL CHARACTER

Project Vicinity

The project site is located in a developed urban area in greater downtown Oakland. Physical development in the area varies from block to block, with some blocks appearing vibrant and attractive while others are in poor condition containing vacant or boarded up buildings. In the immediate project vicinity, building heights vary substantially, ranging from one to ten stories. The area is also characterized by existing buildings that generally have little or no setback from the street, with adjacent surface parking lots, which contribute to a sense of discontinuity between existing land uses. Within the project vicinity, there is a mix of land uses including general and automobile-related commercial / retail, office uses, medium density residential uses, and indoor recreation facilities (the YMCA).

West Grand Avenue, an east-west arterial, forms the southern boundary of the project site. Buildings along West Grand are generally one or two stories tall with little or no setback from the street and with adjacent surface parking lots. Directly across West Grand Avenue from the site is a vacant, two-story commercial building and an adjacent surface parking lot. Also visible to the south, is an eight-story commercial building fronting Broadway that limits long-range views of the high-rise buildings within the City Center area of downtown.

To the west of the site along Valley Street and to the north along 24th Street, buildings range between one and three stories in height and consist of a mix of building materials and architectural design. Building frontages generally extend to the sidewalk. Land uses in this area include a children's day care center (on West Grand Avenue, in a converted restaurant immediately west of the site), multi-family residential uses (on Valley Street, across from the site), surface parking lots, and commercial uses, particularly automobile-related commercial uses. Long-range views are limited because buildings farther to the west and north generally are similar in terms of height and massing, and therefore are blocked from view by close-in development.

The area east of the project site, across Broadway, is characterized by relatively tall buildings (8 to 10 stories), also built to the lot lines, with surface and structured parking. In the project vicinity, Broadway has two travel lanes in each direction, on-street parking and a landscaped median. Directly across Broadway from the project site is a building eight stories tall, occupied by the Oakland YMCA and an adjacent public parking garage. Also across Broadway are surface parking lots along 23rd Street and the Nara Bank building, a 10-story structure at the northeast corner of West Grand Avenue and Broadway. Long-range views from the project site towards the east are somewhat limited due to these taller buildings; however, the East Bay hills are discernible in views from some locations on the site.

Project Site

The project site consists of nearly two full blocks (approximately five acres), occupied by 13 existing buildings that range from one to two-and-a-half stories in height. Most structures on the site are of masonry or concrete construction; however, the facades of buildings on the Broadway frontage of Parcel B have been substantially altered by the addition of large plate-glass windows and metal panels that obscure the original facade materials. Buildings on Valley Street exhibit more of their original brick and concrete exteriors.

Until recently, most of Parcel A was used for surface vehicular storage area associated with the Negherbon automobile businesses but is current a privately-owned, public parking lot not associated with Negherbon operations. Parcel A, in particular, is occupied by only three buildings, lending the block a somewhat disused appearance. Parcel B, with its automobile showrooms and retail uses on Broadway, is more substantially developed. Parcel B also has the only residential uses on the project site, 16 units in a two-story stucco-clad building that is not considered to have notable architectural merit. The residential building is located on 24th Street and is oriented with the individual entrances to the residential units at 90 degrees from the street. About half of Parcel B remains devoted to surface vehicular storage areas associated with the

Negherbon automobile businesses. For additional details regarding building architecture and potential historic significance, see Chapter IV.E Cultural Resources.

VIEWS OF THE SITE

The proposed project site is visible from a number of public vantage points and view corridors in the area. Views of the site generally are limited to short-range views (views adjacent to the site) while long-range views (views that are more than one-half mile from the site) are generally blocked by existing development. Most of the site is not visible in its entirety from a single vantage point because of its approximately five-acre size, the relatively flat topography and surrounding buildings, some of which extend up to ten stories.

The project site is adjacent to two major thoroughfares, Broadway to the east, and West Grand Avenue to the south, which each consist of two travel lanes in each direction and landscaped medians in the project vicinity. Short-range views of the project site are available along these street frontages. (See Figure IV.A-1 and Figures IV.A-2 through IV.A-5, Photo A) None of the public roadways in the project vicinity is designated by the California Department of Transportation as a California Scenic Highway.

REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Oakland General Plan

The City of Oakland General Plan contains comprehensive objectives and policies that guide development in the City. The General Plan consists of a series of elements, each one dealing with a particular topic, which applies citywide. Recently completed and updated elements include the Land Use and Transportation Element (LUTE), the Open Space, Conservation and Recreation Element (OSCAR), Historic Preservation Element, the Estuary Policy Plan, and the Housing Element which was adopted June 15, 2004. Policies contained in the LUTE and the OSCAR Element pertaining to aesthetics and visual resources with relevance to the proposed project include the following:

Land Use and Transportation Element. The following policies address visual resources in Oakland:

- Enhance the visual quality of downtown by preserving and improving existing housing stock and encouraging new, high quality, development. (Objective D2, *Design*)
- Downtown development should be visually interesting, harmonize with its surroundings, respect and enhance important views in and of the downtown, respect the character, history and pedestrian-orientation of the downtown, and contribute to an attractive skyline (Policy D2.1, *Enhancing the Downtown*).
- Create a pedestrian-friendly downtown. (Objective D3, *For Pedestrians*)

- Pedestrian-friendly commercial areas should be promoted. (Policy D3.1, *Promoting Pedestrians*)
- New parking facilities for cars and bicycles should be incorporated into the design of any project in a manner that encourages and promotes safe pedestrian activity. (Policy D3.2, *Incorporating Parking Facilities*)
- Housing in the downtown should be safe and attractive, of high quality design, and respect the downtown's distinct neighborhoods and its history. (Policy D10.5, *Designing Housing*)
- High-quality design standards should be required of all new residential construction. Design requirements and permitting procedures should be developed and implemented in a manner that is sensitive to the added costs of those requirements and procedures (Policy N3.8, *Requiring High Quality Design*).
- Residential developments should be encouraged to face the street and orient their units to desirable sunlight and views, while avoiding unreasonably blocking sunlight and views for neighboring buildings, respecting the privacy needs of residents of the development and surrounding properties, providing for sufficient conveniently located on-site open space, and avoiding undue noise exposure (Policy N3.9, *Orienting Residential Development*).
- Off-street parking for residential buildings should be adequate in amount and conveniently located and laid out, but its visual prominence should be minimized (Policy N3.10, *Guiding the Development of Parking*).
- Diversity in Oakland's built environment should be as valued as the diversity in population. Regulations and permit processes should be geared toward creating compatible and attractive development, rather than "cookie cutter" development (Policy N9.7, *Creating Compatible but Diverse Development*).
- The City encourages rehabilitation efforts which respects the architectural integrity of a building's original style (Policy N9.9, *Respecting Architectural Integrity*).

OSCAR Element. The following policies address visual resources in Oakland:

- Protect the character of existing scenic views in Oakland, paying particular attention to: (a) views of the Oakland Hills from the flatlands; (b) views of downtown and Lake Merritt; (c) views of the shoreline; and (d) panoramic views from Skyline Boulevard, Grizzly Peak Road, and other hillside locations. (Policy OS-10.1)
- Encourage site planning for new development which minimizes adverse visual impacts and takes advantage of opportunities for new vistas and scenic enhancement. (Policy OS-10.2)
- Oakland's underutilized visual resources, including the waterfront, creeks, San Leandro Bay, architecturally significant buildings or landmarks, and major thoroughfares should be enhanced (Policy OS-10.3).
- Provide better access to attractive, sunlit open spaces for persons working or living in downtown Oakland. The development of rooftop gardens is encouraged, especially on parking garages. (Policy OS-11.1, *Access to Downtown Open Space*)

As discussed in the Initial Study provided in Appendix A, and as depicted further throughout the discussion and visual simulations provided in this section, the project generally would be consistent with the above policies. Specifically, it would provide new, “attractive,” infill housing near downtown and close to transit routes at densities consistent with the General Plan. The project would introduce new commercial uses along Broadway and West Grand Avenue - two major commercial thoroughfares - and would provide adequate on-site parking to serve residents, residential visitors, and commercial users. Ground-level residences on Parcel B would include townhouse-style condominiums that would face the street and have individual entrances from the street. The architectural style of the overall project would be varied and compatible with the range of styles found in the nearby area. Also, the height and scale of the proposed development would provide a transition between the taller buildings along the major thoroughfare and the adjacent lower-scaled residential and commercial buildings. The facades of two architecturally notable structures at the east corners of 23rd and Valley would be incorporated into the new development, which is designed to respect the design integrity of those two structures. On-site open space would be provided on top of the two parking garages and would contain usable landscaped courtyards and ancillary recreational facilities for residents. The proposed new construction would be designed and oriented to minimize the blocking of sunlight and maintain key views from nearby buildings. Although, some shading and blocking of short-range views would occur, the impacts on sunlight, noise, and privacy that may result from the project would be consistent with that typically anticipated for residential living within an urban downtown setting like the project site.

Oakland Planning Code

The Oakland Planning Code is the city’s zoning ordinance, and implements the objectives and policies of the Oakland General Plan. The Planning Code identifies height and bulk limitations, and regulations that implement certain goals of the General Plan with respect to visual quality. The building design for proposed projects in Oakland is subject to Section 17.136.070 of the Planning Code, which identifies performance criteria used as part of the City’s design review process:

17.136.070: Design Review Criteria. Except as different criteria are prescribed elsewhere in the zoning regulations, design review approval may be granted only if the proposal conforms to all of the following criteria, as well as to any and all other applicable design review criteria:

A. For Residential Facilities

1. That the proposed design will create a building or set of buildings that are well related to the surrounding area in their setting, scale, bulk, height, materials, and textures;
2. That the proposed design will protect, preserve, or enhance desirable neighborhood characteristics;
3. That the proposed design will be sensitive to the topography and landscape;

4. That, if situated on a hill, the design and massing of the proposed building relates to the grade of the hill; and
5. That the proposed design conforms in all significant respects with the Oakland Comprehensive Plan and with any applicable district plan or development control map which has been adopted by the City Council.

B. For Nonresidential Facilities and Signs

1. That the proposal will help achieve or maintain a group of facilities which are well related to one another and which, when taken together, will result in a well-composed design, with consideration given to site, landscape, bulk, height, arrangement, texture, materials, colors, and appurtenances; the relation of these factors to other facilities in the vicinity; and the relation of the proposal to the total setting as seen from key points in the surrounding area. Only elements of design which have some significant relationship to outside appearance shall be considered, except as otherwise provided in Section 17.102.030;
2. That the proposed design will be of a quality and character which harmonizes with, and serves to protect the value of, private and public investments in the area;
3. That the proposed design conforms in all significant respects with the Oakland Comprehensive Plan and with any applicable district plan or development control map which has been adopted by the City Council.

Except where the above criteria may relate to potential environmental effects that may result from the proposed project, the extent to which the project satisfies these criteria will be considered by the City during its discretionary review of the project.

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

For the purposes of this EIR, implementation of the proposed project would have a significant effect on visual resources if it would exceed the following Standards of Significance, based on Appendix G of the CEQA *Guidelines*:

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

APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

The existing visual character of the site and its surroundings is determined by the attributes of specific features and patterns within the urban environment. Evaluation of potential project

impacts on the existing visual character of the site and surroundings requires analysis of the elements of the project that would be introduced and how those changes (separately or collectively) would affect the character of the site and views of it from public off-site locations.

IMPACTS

Impact A.1: The proposed project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, nor would the project substantially damage scenic resources. (Less than Significant)

The project site is within an existing developed urban environment. Although the project would obscure some long-range views of scenic resources, such as the East Bay Hills from locations immediately adjacent to the site, these views would remain available along view corridors such as Broadway. Furthermore, such scenic views generally are obscured by existing adjacent buildings to the north, south and east of the site, thereby limiting the project's impact. Existing views from the project site are limited to the adjacent urban environment, which are not identified in the Oakland General Plan or by other regulatory agencies as scenic vistas or resources. Additionally, none of the public roadways in the project vicinity are designated as a California Scenic Highway. Therefore the proposed project would have less than significant effects with regard to scenic vistas and resources.

Mitigation: None required.

Impact A.2: Implementation of the proposed project would alter, but would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. (Less than Significant)

The proposed project would alter the visual character of the site from the existing one to two story commercial buildings, a residential building, and surface vehicular storage areas, to a mixed-use residential and commercial site. Specifically, the visual character would be altered by the introduction of new buildings, ranging between six and seven stories including up to 475 residential units, 40,000 square feet of commercial space, 675 parking spaces in multi-story parking structures, and a total of 58,500 square feet of open space in the interior of the Parcels A and B.

The proposed project would demolish all of the existing buildings on the site, with the exception of the exterior facades of two existing structures at the eastern corners of 23rd and Valley Street, one on Parcel A and one on Parcel B.¹ These facades would be retained and incorporated into the proposed project development, (See Chapter IV.C Cultural Resources, Figure IV.C-4). Additionally, the project does not include the existing Saturn dealership at 24th Street and Broadway on Parcel B, therefore there would be no changes to this structure.

¹ As noted, the existing Lucky Goldfish shop at 23rd and Broadway may not be included in the project, if not acquired by the sponsor.

At up to seven stories (approximately 80 feet, including parapet) in height, project buildings would be taller than most immediately adjacent structures to the west and north, but would be consistent with the height of other nearby buildings, including the Saturn automobile dealership at 24th Street and Broadway (on Parcel B) and buildings across Broadway.

The proposed building design for the project would incorporate different materials and styles to articulate the various portions of the project and minimize the bulk of their massing. The proposed architecture includes a combination of modern and traditional design elements, which would be compatible with existing development within the project vicinity. Proposed exterior building materials include stucco, brick veneer, concrete, stone, standing seam metal roof, and fiberglass windows. Colors for the proposed buildings would consist of a range of earth tones, as well as muted red, orange, and yellow tones.

Consistent with the zoning classifications for the site, the proposed project would be subject to the City's Design Review process. During the City's Design Review process, the Planning Commission would influence specific building designs and materials. The project has undergone initial Design Review by the Design Review Committee of the Planning Commission, although formal approval would not occur until the project is before the Planning Commission for consideration of the requested planning entitlements.

On Parcel A, the project proposes buildings that would extend up to seven stories with the first and second levels (ground-floor space with double-height ceiling) of the development fronting Broadway, West Grand Avenue, and portions of 23rd Street containing commercial storefronts. Four to five floors of residential units would occur above storefront levels. Along the remaining portion of 23rd Street and Valley Street, the frontage would be dedicated to lobbies for the housing, a loading berth, garage entrances. Development on Parcel B would replace all of the existing structures (including the existing Lucky Goldfish shop at 23rd and Broadway, if it is acquired by the sponsor), with the exception of the existing Saturn dealership at 24th Street and Broadway (which is not part of the project site), with commercial and residential uses, and an off-street parking structure. Project buildings would be six and seven stories tall along Broadway, and six stories on the rest of the site. The commercial component on Parcel B would be limited to the street frontage along Broadway, where commercial uses would occupy the first and second levels (ground-floor space with double-height ceilings), similar to Parcel A to the south; residential units would occupy the remaining floors on Broadway. One-, two- and three-bedroom townhouse-style condominiums, with separate entrances, would be constructed on the first and second levels along the 23rd, 24th and Valley Street frontages and similarly present fully residential facades to those streets. The ground-floor uses would wrap around an interior parking garage and thereby obscure the parking from view.

The proposed project would represent a change to the project site by increasing the amount of visible building mass on the site from various public vantage points. Parcels currently utilized for surface vehicle storage or privately-owned public parking would be developed, and the density and massing of existing buildings would be increased.

Four visual simulations of the project site as seen from public vantage points in the project vicinity are included in this analysis. Figure IV.A-1 presents a location map of the vantage points, and Figures IV.A-2 through IV.A-5 depict two views: A) without the proposed development and B) with visual simulation of proposed project development.

Figure IV.A-2 presents a view of the project site from the intersection of Broadway and 24th Street looking south along the Broadway corridor. Along Broadway, the proposed project would increase the building height on the site to approximately 80 feet (approximately seven stories) from the existing one- to two-and-a-half-story commercial buildings and the surface vehicular storage and privately-owned public parking areas. In terms of height, massing and setback, the proposed buildings would be consistent with existing buildings in the project area to the south, north and east of the site. The project would establish a street frontage more consistent with the City's downtown urban environment, which could improve the pedestrian environment in the project area. Long-range views of prominent buildings in the downtown City Center to the south would not be affected by the project, and would continue to be visible from public vantage points along Broadway.

Figure IV.A-3 presents a "before" and "after" view of the project site from the southeast corner of Broadway and West Grand Avenue, looking northwest. The existing view of the site consists of a single-story commercial building, previously part of the Negherbon Auto Center and currently an office for a car rental company, and surface vehicular storage and privately-owned public parking areas. In the distance, there are limited views of a few high-rise buildings. The proposed building would dramatically alter the character of the site, by constructing a visually prominent building that would extend up to seven stories with little setback from the sidewalk. The project would activate the street frontage by providing ground-floor commercial uses without large expanses of surface parking and disruptive breaks in the street wall, as at present. Project residents, together with the new commercial uses, could enhance the urban environment of the site and vicinity in a way that would foster pedestrian-level activity.

Figure IV.A-4 shows the project site along 24th Street, west of Broadway, and oriented towards the west. Short-range views are limited to existing commercial development on the project site and across the street. Long-range views are limited due a lack of prominent visual resources, although a small number of taller buildings near Telegraph Avenue are visible on the south side of 24th Street. From this vantage point, the proposed project would extend up to six stories in height, and would present a mix of building materials and architectural styles to the street. The scale of the proposed buildings would be consistent with the existing building at the southwest



Buildings To Be Demolished

- | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1 449 23rd St.* | 5 2366-98 Valley St. / 467 24th St. | 9 2335-37 Broadway | } Shared Facade | (A) 2301 Broadway** |
| 2 439 23rd St. | 6 461 24th St. | 10 2343 Broadway | | |
| 3 2251 Broadway | 7 2315 Broadway | 11 2345 Broadway | } Shared Facade | |
| 4 440-48 23rd St. / 2300-14 Valley St.* | 8 2323 Broadway | 12 421 24th St. | | |

* Facade to be retained

** To be demolished if acquired by sponsor

Key: Arrow indicates direction of photo

Project Site
 Maximum Potential Site

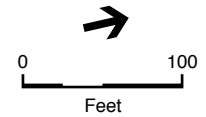


Figure IV.A-1
Key to Vantage Point Locations



A. Existing view of the site from the intersection of Broadway and 24th Street looking south.



B. Proposed view of the site from the intersection of Broadway and 24th Street looking south.



A. Existing view of the site from the intersection of Broadway and West Grand Avenue looking northwest.



A. Proposed view of the site from the intersection of Broadway and West Grand Avenue looking northwest.



A. Existing view of the site from the intersection of Broadway and 24th Street looking west.



B. Proposed view of the site from the intersection of Broadway and 24th Street looking west.



A. Existing view of the site from south of the intersection of Valley and 23rd Streets looking north.



B. Proposed view of the site from south of the intersection of Valley and 23rd Streets looking north.

corner of Broadway and 24th Street, thus continuing an existing streetwall. The proposed buildings would also not affect the limited long-range views of existing development to the west.

Figure IV.A-5 presents a “before” and “after” view of the project site along Valley Street, southwest of the intersection of Valley Street and 23rd Street, looking north. From this vantage point, existing commercial development is visible along Valley Street. The proposed project would retain and incorporate into the new development the building facades at the northeast and southeast corners of Valley Street and 23rd Street. The new buildings would extend up to six stories and would be noticeably taller than surrounding buildings across from the project site; however, the building frontages would be dedicated to lobbies and entrances for the housing component of the project and buildings would be constructed with appropriate and attractive facades to strengthen the project’s compatibility with the existing, lower-scaled, residential uses. This visual simulation from this vantage point also reflects the proposed widening of Valley Street that would occur mid-block, where the new structure is set back from the retained building façade (ground floor level) at the corner of Valley and 23rd Street.

Although development of the proposed project would alter the visual character of the site, the effects to visual quality attributed to the proposed project would not be considered adverse because of the existing lack of visually distinctive features on the site and the overall compatibility of the design of the proposed project with the surrounding uses. Furthermore, the project would bring a sense of visual continuity that is currently lacking in the project site, in that the site currently consists of large expanses of surface parking and vehicle storage. While visual quality is subjective, nothing in the design of the project would inherently degrade the visual character of the site or its surroundings. Thus, the impact would be less than significant.

Mitigation: None required.

Impact A.3: Implementation of the proposed project would result in an increase in light and glare at the project site. (Less than Significant)

The project site consists of surface vehicular storage areas with overhead lighting and one to two-and-a-half story buildings, which are an existing source of light and glare. The proposed project would result in more intensive uses and increased building masses on the site, thus increasing the amount of night lighting and glare from window glazing, while also eliminating large areas of surface parking and vehicle storage that currently are a source of glare from pole lights and auto windows. Change due to the project would not substantially affect the overall ambient light levels in the project vicinity, as light and glare produced from the proposed project would be typical of other commercial and residential structures nearby, and throughout the downtown area. The project would therefore not produce obtrusive light or glare that would substantially affect other properties in the vicinity.

The project site is located in a developed urban area that has a variety of existing sources of light and glare from commercial and residential uses. Additionally, the project site is adjacent to two

major thoroughfares, Broadway and West Grand Avenue, and other local roadways with street lighting that projects light during evening hours. Exterior lighting associated with the proposed project would generally include fixed indirect lighting, located at building and parking garage entrance points, and public walkways to promote resident, visitor and driver safety.

In general, exterior lighting would be designed with downward-pointing lights, side shields, and visors to minimize “spill light” (light that falls on off-site receptors causing additional unwanted illumination) to adjacent commercial and residential uses. Occasional uplighting may be used to locally highlight select landscaping or building features. The project would consist of buildings typical of commercial and residential buildings in the project area therefore it would not result in substantial adverse light or glare impacts.

As part of the City’s required design review procedure, the reflective properties of proposed building materials will be assessed to ensure that the use of reflective exterior building materials is minimized and that it would not create additional daytime or nighttime glare. In addition, lighting plans for the proposed project will be reviewed in the final design stages, and approved by the City prior to installation, thereby ensuring that any outdoor night lighting for the proposed project would not create excessive nighttime glare.

Mitigation: None required.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Impact A.4: The proposed project, in conjunction with cumulative development, would alter the visual character in the project vicinity. (Less than Significant)

Future development in the project vicinity, and throughout the city, is guided by land use designations contained in the Land Use and Transportation Element of the Oakland General Plan. As noted in LUTE General Plan Policy D10.3, Framework for Housing Densities, “Downtown residential areas should generally be within the Urban Density Residential and Central Business District density ranges, where not otherwise specified.” The height and bulk should reflect existing and desired district character, the overall city skyline, and the existence of historic structures or areas.” Further, the intent of the “Central Business District” designation is “to encourage, support, and enhance the downtown area as a high density mixed use urban center of regional importance and a primary hub for business, communications, office, government, high technology, retail, entertainment, and transportation in Northern California.” The Urban Density Residential land use category allows a maximum gross density of 125 dwelling units per gross acre.

The proposed 15-acre Uptown Mixed-Use project, located less than one-half mile south of the project site, is a high density, mixed-use project consisting of approximately 1,270 residential units, 1,050 student beds/faculty units, approximately 43,000 square feet of commercial space, 1,959 parking spaces, and a 25,000 square foot public park. Building heights would vary

between five and 22 stories. The Uptown Mixed-Use Project is substantially larger than the proposed project and would extend the dense downtown character from the City Center core towards the proposed project site. Given the land use designations in the project vicinity, it is expected that cumulative development would consist of building density and massing comparable to the proposed project and the Uptown Mixed-Use project.

The building height, massing and density associated with the proposed project would be consistent with the planned cumulative density and visual character in the project vicinity established by the General Plan. With increasing density and building heights would come some obstruction of existing views. As with the proposed project, however, view corridors would continue to permit views of the hills and Lake Merritt from locations within the greater downtown area.

Also with increasing density, larger and taller buildings would be more visually prominent than the smaller-scale buildings they replace. Ultimately, appropriate building design, guided by the City's design review procedure, would be more important than sheer building size in determining the visual character of the greater downtown. The City's design review process for projects that "require special design treatment and consideration of relationships to the physical surroundings," is described above in the setting section of this chapter, where it is noted that the process is intended to ensure, among other things, that buildings are "well related" to the surrounding area and are "well-composed" in design, and that the project "protect, preserve, or enhance desirable neighborhood characteristics" and "harmonize[] with, and serve[] to protect the value of, private and public investments in the area."

Therefore, with continued implementation of the design review process, the proposed project, in addition to future developments in the vicinity, would not result in cumulative impacts on the visual resources of the surrounding area and the impact would be less than significant.

Mitigation: None required.
