

## 4.1 AESTHETICS

This section describes the visual resources, including scenic views and built features that contribute to the overall visual character and aesthetic quality of the project area. Policies and regulations relating to visual resources are also discussed.

Impacts to visual resources that may occur as a result of the project are assessed, primarily through comparisons of existing visual character and existing views with photo simulations depicting future conditions. Potential visual impacts identified in this section include blocked views of surrounding hills and Monterey Bay/the Pacific Ocean, changes to the visual character of the project area, and the introduction of new sources of light and glare into the project area. Mitigation measures are included to reduce potentially significant aesthetic impacts. Cumulative visual impacts are also evaluated, as well as the project's contribution to such cumulative impacts. Information in this section was developed from background information provided in *West Broadway Avenue Existing Conditions* report prepared in 2007 (DC&E 2007 Report) and site reconnaissance of the project area.

### 4.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

#### Visual Character

The visual character of the project area is defined by visually distinct sub-areas, including West Broadway Avenue, Del Monte Boulevard, Palm Avenue, Canyon Del Rey Boulevard, as well as by surrounding residential and commercial areas outside the project area. This document compiles a number of photographs of existing visual conditions in these areas, from which this discussion of visual character has been developed. Locations from which photographs were taken are shown in **Figure 4.1-1**.

#### West Broadway Avenue

**Figures 4.1-2a, 4.1-2b, and 4.1-3a** depict West Broadway Avenue's existing visual character. **Figure 4.1-2a** was taken at the intersection of Calaveras Street, facing east. **Figure 4.1-2b** was taken at the intersection with Hillsdale Street facing west. **Figure 4.1-3a** was also taken at the Hillsdale Street intersection, but facing east. These photographs show that existing buildings on and near West Broadway Avenue are predominantly single-story "boxy" structures, composed in a variety of architectural styles, including Spanish Colonial Revival, Art Deco, and vernacular.<sup>1</sup> Materials used in these buildings include masonry, wood, stucco, and glass. A considerable number of buildings date from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Visual inspection of the area found varying levels of building maintenance, with lower levels of maintenance in several areas, lending a worn character to the street. Relatively low building heights and limited street trees

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<sup>1</sup> "Vernacular" is a term that describes the typical local architectural styles of any area or region.







here exaggerate the perceived width of the street, which includes four travel lanes plus parking lanes along the sidewalks.

Certain stretches of buildings along West Broadway Avenue have a consistent setback along the back of the sidewalk (“back” meaning the edge of the sidewalk farther from the street). This type of layout of a built edge and consistent building rhythm and massing is appealing to most pedestrians. In general, the stores along West Broadway Avenue also have large, uncovered windows facing the street, which allows pedestrians to window shop. This type of transparency between the street and the building interior allows for an unobstructed visual connection for passing pedestrians, which may encourage them to enter the store or restaurant. However, in other areas along West Broadway Avenue, this rhythm is interrupted by vacant lots and parking areas, such as between Hillsdale Avenue and Contra Costa Street, resulting in a degraded visual character in such areas.

### **Del Monte Boulevard**

**Figure 4.1-3b** shows existing visual conditions within the Del Monte Boulevard sub-area. This photograph was taken at the intersection of Del Monte Boulevard and West Broadway Avenue, facing southwest.

Existing buildings along Del Monte Boulevard are mostly single-story and are comprised of a range of vernacular architectural types. Building facings are largely comprised of stucco, wood, and concrete. The 2007 DC&E Report found that the buildings along Del Monte Boulevard are considerably older than those on West Broadway Avenue, with a larger percentage of vacant and underutilized lots. Similar to the visual environment of West Broadway Avenue, the relatively low building heights on this street tend to amplify the perceived width of the street. At the western end, Del Monte Boulevard might be characterized as having an automobile-oriented visual environment, with traffic queues at the intersection with Canyon Del Rey Boulevard and several parking lots, particularly on properties along the north side of the street. Moving eastward, Del Monte Boulevard is characterized by having several auto service businesses. For the visual environment, this leads to the street having a number of relatively low garage style buildings, whose bay doors open to reveal auto service areas.

Although some of the buildings along Del Monte Boulevard have a setback along the back edge of the sidewalk, there are several buildings that are more significantly setback from the sidewalk, breaking the building rhythm and massing.

### **Palm Avenue**

Palm Avenue is where most residential properties in the project area are located, although a few residential properties are scattered along West Broadway Avenue and Canyon Del Rey Boulevard. **Figure 4.1-4a** displays a photograph taken on Palm Avenue at Hillsdale Street, facing east. As shown in the photo, this area has a medium density residential character, with many cottage and vernacular style residences typical of the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, displaying a range of levels of upkeep, landscaping, and maintenance. Utility poles and associated lines are prominent visual features. Many residences have low fences at the back edge of the sidewalk. A



contributing element to the visual character of this subarea is comprised of the cars parked in front yard and driveway areas along sides of the street. Among the single family residences are two and three story multiple unit residential buildings, particularly at intersections, which visually contrast in scale with the single family buildings, but help provide visual landmarks to denote intersections.

### **Canyon Del Rey Boulevard**

**Figure 4.1-4b** depicts a photograph taken in Laguna Grande Park, on the west side of Canyon Del Rey Boulevard, southwest and outside of the project area. The visual character of Canyon Del Rey Boulevard is influenced in part by the presence of this park and by the adjacent Laguna Grande. The park is comprised of a relatively flat, grassy area; a row of somewhat mature evergreen trees run along the street.

The properties adjacent to the portion of Canyon Del Rey Boulevard within the project area (across the street from the park) include several vacant lots and scattered single family residential properties similar in character to the residential buildings along Palm Avenue.

On the west side of Canyon Del Rey Boulevard, across from the project area, the visual character is comprised of views of parking areas adjacent to commercial buildings. This area contrasts visually with the adjacent park area to the south as well as with the residential properties across Canyon Del Rey Boulevard to the east. Canyon Del Rey Boulevard currently has few pedestrian or bicycle amenities, and lacks a continuous sidewalk on both sides. The existing Embassy Suites Hotel, 12 stories in height, forms a prominent focal point for pedestrians and motorists traveling towards it on Canyon Del Rey Boulevard.

### **Surrounding Neighborhoods**

South of the project area are residential neighborhoods (along such streets as Elm Avenue, Sonoma Avenue, and their immediate cross streets), comprised primarily of single-story residential dwellings in a wide variety of architectural styles and building materials. The sizes of the residences vary from as little as 400 square feet to about 2,500 square feet in area. Many of the larger residences have intricate architectural features and well-maintained landscaped yards. The housing ranges in age from relatively new buildings to buildings 30-50 years old.

Other surrounding neighborhoods are commercial in nature, but the visual character of these areas is far from uniform. Immediately east of the project area along West Broadway Avenue is a newly developed commercial area (known as City Center). Buildings in this development are single story but at a greater height (approximately 20 feet or greater in places) than single story buildings to the west along West Broadway Avenue. Moreover, City Center's buildings reflect a fine grain of architectural detail, with tremendous variation in fenestration, awnings, special elements (such as the tower/rotunda feature above Starbucks Coffee), and finish colors/materials. These details help distinguish individual units within the development, giving it the appearance of being composed individually and organically (although the entire Center was developed at once).

Farther to the east along Fremont Boulevard is automobile oriented commercial development comprised mostly of single story commercial buildings with individual parking areas. Fremont Boulevard has a planted median in limited places; near the project area, the median includes palm trees that add an element of verticality to the otherwise relatively “flat” and low visual environment. The “Mi Tierra” taqueria located at the corner of Fremont Avenue and West Broadway Avenue outside the project area is visually distinctive with a Quonset hut style rounded roof and bold yellow coloring.

North and northeast of the project area is the Seaside Auto Mall. This area features modern glass and steel buildings with extensive areas used for the display and storage of new cars. The Auto Mall area features two 70-foot tall light towers, whose height and wattage (described further below) make them visually prominent from many locations in the City. To the west/southwest of the project area, across Canyon Del Rey Boulevard, is the previously described Embassy Suites Hotel, which at 12 stories in height is the tallest building in the City and forms a prominent visual landmark for many miles along the Monterey Peninsula.

## Views

Views from the City of Seaside are considered an important feature because they provide a sense of place and contribute to community identity and character. The City’s adopted General Plan specifically mentions the Monterey Bay/Pacific Ocean, Roberts Lake, Laguna Grande, coastal dunes, and views of surrounding hills and mountains as important scenic views. Additionally, these views, particularly views of the hills, help to provide physical orientation. Although views of the hills are accessible toward the east, west, and south, certain view corridors provide better views than others. Specifically, the major City streets, such as Canyon Del Rey Boulevard, Del Monte Boulevard, and Broadway Avenue, provide clear views of these hills. **Figure 4.1-5a** and **Figure 4.1-5b** show existing distant views across the project area. **Figure 4.1-5a** shows existing views to the west from the intersection of West Broadway Avenue and Flores Street. From this vantage point, (approximately 1 mile from the intersection of West Broadway Avenue and Del Monte Boulevard) one can see Monterey Bay/the Pacific Ocean, taller and coast-front buildings in the City of Monterey, and in the more distant background, a green ridge that slopes down to the Pacific Grove area to the west and the greater Carmel Valley area to the east. The Embassy Suites Hotel is plainly visible from this vantage point as well.

**Figure 4.1-5b** is a view looking west from Mescal Park. Mescal Park is located about one third of a mile to the east of the Flores Street/West Broadway Avenue intersection, but is at a higher elevation in the foothill area near General Jim Moore Boulevard. As shown in this photo, the dominant visual element in the distance is Monterey Bay and the Monterey/Pacific Grove area. The 12-story Embassy Suites Hotel is visible from this vantage point, near the lower left corner.

Views from within the project area of Monterey Bay/the Pacific Ocean and sand dunes along the shore are visible only at points along Canyon del Rey Boulevard and Contra Costa Street.



## Light and Glare

Lighting sources in the project area consist predominantly of storefronts, commercial properties, cars, street lights, and residences. Within the project area, lighting sources currently generate relatively low levels of night lighting.

To the north, the project area borders the Seaside Auto Mall, which generates light that contributes to ambient levels in the project area as well as points beyond. The Auto Mall relies on two 70-foot tall light towers for night lighting. The towers are located at two points, including the intersection of Calaveras Street and Clementina Avenue at the center of Heitzinger Plaza and in Geary Plaza at the intersection of Echo Street and The Mall. The Heitzinger Plaza light tower is located closest to the project area, approximately a tenth of a mile away. Each light tower contains four 1,000-watt light bulbs.

### 4.1.2 REGULATORY SETTING

#### California Coastal Act

The California Coastal Act<sup>2</sup> sets forth standards used by the California Coastal Commission (Commission) in its coastal development permit decisions and for the review of local coastal programs (LCPs) prepared by local governments and submitted to the Commission for approval. These policies are also used by the Commission to review federal activities that affect the coastal zone. Coastal cities and counties must incorporate these policies into their individual LCPs.<sup>3</sup> As of January 2009, most of the project area is outside of the Coastal Zone, except a strip of land along the west side of Del Monte Boulevard which is in the Coastal Zone and thus subject to the California Coastal Act.

Section 30251 of the Coastal Act emphasizes the scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas as important resources to be protected. The policies call for visual compatibility, minimization of natural land forms, and the enhancement of visual quality.

#### Project Consistency

While only a small portion of the project area is currently within the Coastal Zone, future development projects within the project area that are located within the Coastal Zone will be required to comply with the above policies and will require Coastal Development Permits.<sup>4</sup> As

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<sup>2</sup> Public Resources Code, Title 20

<sup>3</sup> A certified LCP consists of the combination of a certified Land Use Plan (LUP) and a certified Implementation Plan. As of January 2009, the City of Seaside has a certified LUP and is in the process of preparing an Implementation Plan for future certification by the Coastal Commission. The Coastal Commission will retain regulatory oversight in the vicinity of the project area until the LCP is certified.

<sup>4</sup> The issuing authority will remain the Coastal Commission until an LCP for Seaside is certified, at which time permitting authority will be transferred to the city, and the Commission will retain the ability to appeal local decisions.

discussed in **Section 4.1.3, Transportation**, the project has the potential to result in impacts to views of surrounding scenic coastal resources. However, impacts would be fully mitigated by design policies of the Specific Plan. No natural land forms are anticipated to be altered as part of the project. Therefore, the project would be consistent with the applicable policies of the Coastal Act.

## Seaside General Plan

The Land Use Element, Urban Design Element, and the Conservation/Open Space Element of the City of Seaside General Plan provide goals, policies, and implementation plans with the goals of revitalization of areas of the City, enhancing the visual character of the City, preserving existing visual resources and community identity, and preserving the night skies. The General Plan's policies and implementation plans relevant to aesthetics are listed below.

### Revitalization

*Policy LU2.4: During redevelopment and revitalization activities, ensure quality architectural and design themes.*

*Implementation Plan LU-2.4.1: Design Guidelines*

*Develop design guidelines that address signage, building facades, lighting, landscaping, and building color.*

### Image and Identity

*Goal UD-1: Create and maintain a positive image that also provides a clear identity for the community within the region.*

*Policy UD-1.1: Enhance the City's image and identity within the region's natural setting.*

*Implementation Plan UD-1.1.1: "Gateway to the Monterey Peninsula"*

*Through the Specific Plan process and the implementation of Design Guidelines, create entrances to the City that announce arrival and help establish the City as the "Gateway to the Monterey Peninsula." Ensure project include landscaping, design theme, landmark features, and signing to provide visual harmony and united development at the major gateways.*

*Implementation Plan UD-1.1.2: Architectural Design Standards*

*Adopt architectural design standards for new construction, building additions and redevelopment activities to ensure quality development. The design guidelines will address site planning, architecture, landscaping, signing, and access to light that will encourage a well designed, visually appealing and cohesive community.*

*Policy UD-1.2: Support a variety of neighborhood revitalization and improvement programs to address commercial and residential areas in need of enhancement.*

*Implementation Plan UD-1.2.1: Landscaping Plans and Design Features*

*Include landscaping plans and design features in accordance with the new design features in all public improvement plans for the City.*

*Implementation Plan UD-1.2.2: Private and Volunteer Visual Enhancement Programs*

*Support and encourage private volunteer activities that enhance the visual character of the community.*

### **Neighborhood Preservation**

*Goal UD-2: Create and preserve distinct neighborhood and business districts.*

*Policy UD-2.1: Protect the character of single-family neighborhoods by restricting out-of-scale buildings, incompatible uses and designs, blocked views and/or access to sunlight, and excessive through traffic.*

*Implementation Plan UD-2.1.1: Design Standards in Zoning Ordinance*

*Adopt design standards in the Seaside Zoning Ordinance to establish the scale of buildings, guidelines for quality design in new construction, building additions, and redevelopment, procedures to protect existing private views and access to sunlight as much as possible while at the same time allowing others the opportunity to enjoy the magnificent views from Seaside.*

*Policy UD-2.2: Minimize potential light and sound impacts of new development and redevelopment on surrounding areas.*

*Implementation Plan UD-2.2.2: Access to Light*

*Include standards in the design guidelines requiring new development to preserve as much access to natural light as possible for existing developments.*

*Implementation Plan UD-2.4.2: West Broadway Corridor Design Guidelines*

*Create and adopt specific design guidelines for the West Broadway Corridor to encourage pedestrian orientation, to create a village atmosphere, to provide public meeting places for social interaction and to establish the appropriate scale of development.*

## **Streetscapes and Viewsheds**

**Goal UD-3:** *Provide and maintain a streetscape system that protects views and enhances visual quality and continuity within the community.*

**Policy UD-3.1:** *Protect private views of significant natural features, such as Monterey Bay, Roberts Lake, the Pacific Ocean, the surrounding mountains, and other important viewsheds.*

**Implementation Plan UD-3.1.1:** *View Protection and the Board of Architectural Review*

*Continue to require all additions that increase building heights and new developments to stake and flag development at least ten days prior to consideration by the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) for design approval. When feasible, require project site redesign, modified landscaping, or reduced building heights to avoid obstruction of private views.*

**Policy UD-3.2:** *Preserve the unique public views visible from the Highway 1 Corridor between Fremont Boulevard and the northern boundary of the City as identified in the Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FOR A) Plan.*

**Implementation Plan UD-3.2.1:** *Viewshed Protection Standards*

*Establish and enforce design guidelines and standards to preserve and protect public and private viewsheds while still allowing development to occur.*

## **Civic Art and Design**

**Goal UD-4:** *Provide civic art and community design that instills pride and creates a sense of place.*

**Policy UD-4.1:** *Encourage the provision of provision of civic art into public and private development and redevelopment projects.*

**Policy UD-4.2:** *Enhance the downtown business areas with civic art and design projects.*

**Implementation Plan UD-4.2.1:** *Public Art Design Incentive in Zoning Ordinance*

*Encourage new development to include public art in their development plans as a design consideration incentive in the Design Guidelines in the Seaside Zoning Ordinance.*

**Policy UD-4.3:** *Provide attractive community gathering places that meet the social, civic, cultural, and recreational needs of the community.*

**Implementation Plan UD-4.3.1:** *Public Plazas and Gathering Places*

*Include public plazas and other appropriate gathering places in design considerations for the West Broadway Central Business Corridor and the Broadway Civic Center.*

*Implementation Plan UD-4.3.2: Enhance Public Gathering Places*

*Maintain and enhance the City's public community centers and parks.*

### **Preservation of Night Skies**

***Goal COS-8:*** *Encourage exterior lighting that preserves night skies.*

***Policy COS-8.1:*** *Participate in local and regional efforts to reduce light pollution of night skies.*

***Implementation Plan COS-8.1.1:*** *Shielded Street Lights*

*The City shall continue to implement its policy to require that all new street lights placed in the public right-of-way be fully shielded.*

***Implementation Plan COS-8.1.2:*** *Design Guidelines for Exterior Light Sources*

*The City shall develop design guidelines that require wherever possible that exterior light sources be controlled and/or shielded to the downward direction so as to not glare or be directly visible beyond the limits of the parcel.*

### **Project Consistency**

The project would result in an overall improvement to the visual character of the project area through the application of extensive and detailed design guidelines and development standards. The Specific Plan includes standards focused on locations within the project area (certain corridors, gateways, etc.) as well as standards particular to different land use types (mixed use, commercial, residential, etc). The standards and guidelines address the need to provide sensitive transitions between different areas and different land uses within the project area, with particular attention to scaling the density from the proposed urban core along West Broadway Avenue to lower levels at the southern end of the project area, which is adjacent to lower density single family neighborhoods. Taken as a whole, the application of these standards and guidelines to individual development projects proposed within the project area would result in a more unified, finer-grained, and more visually appealing aesthetic character in the project area relative to existing conditions.

Other design guidelines and development standards provide for visual enhancements along corridors and at gateways, as well as the protection of viewsheds. The project encourages incorporating public art as a means of improving the visual character of certain areas. The Specific Plan also includes design standards, which would ensure that lighting fixtures are certified by the International Dark-Sky Association, and would thus not result in excessive

nighttime light spillover that would compromise views of stars and planets in the sky. In all, the project would be consistent with the policies and implementation plans within the Seaside General Plan insofar as application of the design guidelines and development standards would result in development on the ground consistent with the policies and implementation plans of the General Plan related to aesthetics.

### 4.1.3 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

#### Significance Criteria

In accordance with Appendix G of the *CEQA Guidelines*, the project would have a significant environmental impact related to aesthetics if it would:

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

#### Issues Not Discussed Further

##### **Substantially damage scenic resources within a state scenic highway.**

According to a review of a Caltrans-maintained list of eligible and officially designated scenic highways, the closest officially designated state highway to the project area is a portion of State Route 1 between State Route 68 (south of the project area) and the Carmel River. In addition, a portion of State Route 68 between State Route 1 and the Salinas River to the east is also officially designated. Neither of these portions of highway are readily visible from the project area nor is the project area readily visible from these stretches of highway. The officially designated portion of State Route 68 is screened from the project area by intervening topography. State Route 1 between State Route 68 and the Carmel River is also more than a mile from the project area. This highway is known for its dramatic views, which, in the general vicinity of the project area consist of rolling sand dunes and of Monterey Bay. These scenic resources are located west of State Route 1, and would not be affected by the project, which is entirely east of State Route 1. There would be no impact to scenic resources along this route and, therefore, this issue is not discussed further.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Eligible And Officially Designated Routes, <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/cahisys.htm>, Accessed 22 Jan 2009.

## Project Impacts

**Impact 4.1-1: The redevelopment of the project area would change the physical scale of the built environment and introduce new visual treatments, including detailed architectural guidance, landscaping, gateway features, and public art, through adherence to Specific Plan policies, design guidelines, development standards, to create a uniform and more visually coherent built environment and improvement over existing visual character. Over the buildout period of the project, the conversion of the project area from its existing to the proposed visual character would be a beneficial impact. (Beneficial Impact)**

The existing visual character of the project area is currently dominated by commercial uses along West Broadway Avenue and Del Monte Boulevard, including many one-story buildings of varying architectural styles and ages, inconsistent building setbacks, and a number of vacant parcels and/or surface level parking areas, which collectively detract from the overall visual quality of the area. Implementing the project would gradually redevelop the project area over time, replacing existing uses with new developments that would adhere to urban design policies, development standards, and design guidelines identified in the project.

Basic design principles for the project area are outlined in Section C of Chapter 7, Development Standards and Design Guidelines of the Specific Plan. Principles include orienting buildings to face public streets, and breaking up the massing of larger buildings into “smaller components that more readily relate to the human scale.” Other principles include ensuring buildings have a pedestrian orientation, articulated façades to break up undifferentiated walls, and a strong relationship to human form. Section 3.4, Project Characteristics, provides a discussion of the design principles that would be implemented as part of the project.

### **Mixed Use Commercial Areas: West Broadway Avenue and Del Monte Boulevard**

In Section D of Chapter 7 of the Specific Plan, these design principles are more specifically defined as they apply to commercial mixed use development. Façade articulation is more precisely defined to require emphasis of three dimensional detailing such as cornices, window moldings, textures, and reveals. Another policy states that “each shop should have a distinct façade with a unique character” (*D.5.1.10*). Landscape development standards of the Section D design principles require pedestrian paths or walkways to incorporate landscaping and decorative paving to define the pedestrian space” (*D.6.1.1*). Other standards and guidelines require trash bins to be secured and screened from view, (*D.1.3.2*, *D.1.4.5*, and *D.1.4.6*). Additionally, visual guidelines ensure that small scale manufacturing allowed in mixed use areas is compatible with surrounding developments (*D.1.5.2*).

Conceptual design renderings of the long term visual character of the commercial mixed use developments in the project area are provided in **Figures 4.1-6b, 4.1-7b, 4.1-8b and 4.1-9b**. In comparing the renderings with photographs of existing conditions, one can observe that all of the above-described factors that detract from the existing visual environment are addressed. Future conditions show an improved level of architectural quality in the street’s commercial building, along with a consistent street frontage of buildings, whose rhythm is unbroken by

excessive vacant lots and/or parking areas. Street trees and street furniture further enhance the visual quality of the pedestrian environment of the street.

### **Palm Avenue**

Section E of Chapter 7 of the Specific Plan specifies how the basic design principles are to be applied to residential developments, such as in the Palm Avenue area. Massing is to be broken down to give individuality to units in larger buildings (*E.2.1.1*); units shall also incorporate architectural features that help distinguish them, such as distinct color schemes and individual roof treatments (*E.2.1.4*).

This section also provides standards for landscape design to ensure that new landscape features “contribute to the open space character of residential projects as well as the character of residential neighborhoods” (*E.3 Intent*). Additionally, trash enclosures for multi-family buildings would be located away from public view (*E.4.2.5*), fences would be landscaped to reduce negative visual impacts (*E.4.4.6*), and views from parking areas would be buffered by landscaping and earth berms (*E.5.2.3*).

**Figure 4.1-10b** provides a conceptual rendering of the visual character of residential development consistent with project policies, design guidelines, and development standards. The long-term conditions rendering indicates a number of improvements to the visual character of the area, including street trees and a landscaped parkway on both sides of the street, removal of cars that currently park across informal “sidewalk areas,” new buildings that reflect the high-quality architecture called for in the design guidelines and development standards discussed above, and the underground of utility lines.

### **Canyon Del Rey Boulevard**

Along Canyon Del Rey Boulevard within the project area, a linear neighborhood park would be developed as part of the project. The park would include a pedestrian path and bicycle lanes would be added to the street alignment. Additional amenities would include community gardens and interpretive signage (*Policy PR-8*). The park and proposed amenities will enhance the visual character of the Canyon Del Rey Boulevard corridor.

As discussed in further detail below, the project would allow for the development of buildings up to eight stories in height on two parcels on Canyon Del Rey Boulevard, across the street from the existing 12 story Embassy Suites Hotel. These two parcels are the only areas within the project area where building heights greater than five stories would be permitted. The potential location of eight story buildings on these parcels offer the opportunity to provide a sensitive transition from the existing 12 story hotel to the proposed three to five story character of the bulk of the project area. In fact, the inclusion of eight story buildings in this portion of the project area has the potential to improve the existing visual character insofar as the existing 12 story hotel currently exists somewhat in isolation. Nearby buildings are typically one and two stories in height. By allowing eight story buildings in this location of the project area, the resulting visual effect will be to minimize the “isolated” appearance of the 12 story hotel and provide an overall softer, less jagged urban form to the City as a whole.











## Resulting Visual Character

After the implementation of development standards and design guidelines, the resulting visual character at build-out would be characterized by a more consistent built environment comprising an “urban village” identity for the project area. New unifying features would include public gathering plazas, civic art, and pedestrian paseos. The project would require sensitive transitions between new higher density mixed-use and existing lower density residences to better preserve surrounding neighborhood characteristics and thus minimize impacts on the visual character.

Ultimately, the application of the above development standards and design guidelines to new development proposed for the project area would mitigate to a less than significant level potential visual impacts of new development by providing finely-grained rules governing the size, placement, and appearance of new development. In sum, project implementation would result in a beneficial impact to area visual character. No mitigation is required.

**Impact 4.1-2: The increased building heights allowed along West Broadway Avenue, portions of Del Monte Boulevard, and portions of Canyon Del Rey Boulevard would not substantially alter public views of designated scenic vistas, including surrounding hills, Roberts Lake, and Monterey Bay, available from viewpoints in and outside the project area. (Less than Significant)**

As shown in **Figure 4.1-11**, the project would allow a mixture of building heights in the project area. The increase in allowable building heights has the potential to affect views within and from areas around the project area. With the exception of two parcels on Canyon Del Rey Boulevard at West Broadway Avenue, where buildings up to eight stories in height would be allowed, maximum building heights in the project area would be limited to three to five stories.

## Views From the Project Area

As previously noted, distant views in the project area of Monterey Bay/the Pacific Ocean and most distant hillsides, designated scenic vistas in the City’s General Plan, are generally limited to views from streets within the project area. Streets within the project area would remain as view corridors under project implementation. The general configuration of the street network within the project area would be unchanged. The project would include the realignment of the intersection of West Broadway Avenue, Contra Costa Street, and Del Monte Boulevard, but this realignment would not result in the inclusion of any buildings within the street area that would diminish views. In fact, as shown in the visual simulations of future conditions on West Broadway Avenue and Del Monte Boulevard, the inclusion of taller buildings and street trees in these corridors would help to provide a sharpening context to more distant views of water and hills. In all, the project would not result in any significant decrease in views along streets within the project area.

## Views Toward the Project Area

Immediately outside the project area, views are possible from within the Embassy Suites Hotel, from public vantage points to the east, particularly at elevations above that of the project area, as well as from points along State Route 1.

To illustrate potential view impacts related to increases in allowable building heights, a visual simulation was prepared showing the view looking west from Broadway Avenue under existing and future conditions with the addition of eight story buildings. **Figure 4.1-12a** shows existing visual conditions from the intersection of Broadway Avenue and Flores Street, approximately one mile from the project area. From this vantage point, the project area lies largely in the area between the southern edge of (West) Broadway Avenue and the 12-story Embassy Suites Hotel, prominently visible to the south/left of Broadway Avenue. From this vantage point, the top six to eight stories of the Embassy Suites Hotel are visible with only limited views of lower stories. The hotel blocks views of the southernmost reaches of Monterey Bay/the Pacific Ocean (water areas near Monterey State Beach), but otherwise does not obscure these bay or ocean views. The hotel does not obscure the view of the ridgeline that descends from east to west into Pacific Grove.

**Figure 4.1-12b** depicts future conditions in the project area. From this distance, the only buildings in the project area that would be visible are those that would be constructed at up to eight stories in height to the east of the existing Embassy Suites Hotel. New buildings in the project area of up to five stories in height would be largely obscured from this location by the distance of one mile and by intervening trees. As such, buildings of up to five stories in height would not block bay or ocean views nor of the ridgeline across the water.

It should be noted that these massings were developed to represent a “worst-case” visual scenario, in that they are comprised of buildings that would completely fill in the two parcels where eight story buildings would be allowable under the project. The simulations do not reflect the application of design guidelines and development standards that would be pertinent to this site under the Specific Plan, which would result in a different appearance to any eight story buildings on this site. Pertinent standards within the Specific Plan include design standard *B.5.4*, which would require the upper four stories to be attenuated or “stepped back” from the base of the building, resulting in a more slender tower. Standard *D.5.1* sets forth requirements for articulation of façades and requirements for finer-grain design details for the top of any building. Further, design standard *F.1* sets forth requirements for the design of any “gateway” buildings; the location where eight story buildings would be allowed is designated in the Specific Plan as a gateway location. Notwithstanding the above, the “worst-case” massing shown in **Figure 4.1-12b** is useful for the review of potential visual effects, insofar as the actual massing of any building proposed for this site would be reduced in bulk and richer in architectural detail than this simulation.

As shown in **Figure 4.1-12b**, the possible inclusion of eight story buildings in this location in the project area would obscure current views of the waters in the vicinity of the Monterey Pier. Views of more northern reaches of Monterey Bay/the Pacific Ocean would be unaffected, as

would views of the ridgeline across the water from Seaside. It is estimated that the amount of the bay/ocean views that would be blocked by these eight story buildings represents less than five percent of all such water views visible from this location and similar locations nearby.

**Figure 4.1-5b** shows existing views from Mescal Park. As shown in the photo, Mescal Park offers sweeping views of Monterey Bay/the Pacific Ocean and the ridgeline across the water. The 12-story Embassy Suites Hotel is visible to the left. The hotel blocks some bay/ocean views but does not block views of the ridgeline. If eight-story buildings are introduced into the project area in the specified location, the new buildings would not block views of the ridgeline or substantially interrupt bay/ocean views from Mescal Park.

From other public areas outside the project area, the new eight story buildings would result in little to no blockage of water or ridgeline views nor compromise other important views. **Figure 4.1-13** shows the location of the project area relative to other public parks in the City. Views from parks north of Broadway Avenue would not be obstructed by the project. From Laguna Grande Park along Canyon Del Rey Boulevard (see **Figure 4.1-4b** to see existing conditions in this area), views of any new eight story buildings would be behind trees currently lining the street; only upper stories of any new buildings would be visible and would not result in blockage of bay/ocean views. Bay/ocean views from this park are largely compromised by the presence of the existing Embassy Suites Hotel. The new eight story buildings would be to the east of the Embassy Suites Hotel and thus would not result in any additional blockage to bay/ocean views or of the ridgeline across the water.

To the south of the project area, the terrain slopes downhill and does not provide views in the direction of the project area. Views from the Coastal Trail to the west of the project area are primarily of the Bay and adjacent dunes. The project area is on the opposite side of State Route 1 from the Bay and dune side and as such, the project would pose no disruption of Bay or ridgeline views for people on the Coastal Trail or alongshore.

In all, the project would result in minimal disruption to views of Monterey Bay/the Pacific Ocean (views of which the adopted General Plan designates as scenic), and no disruption of the view of the ridgeline across the water. While some bay/ocean views from public locations would be interrupted by new eight story buildings, the degree of interruption is low relative to views that would remain. Locations across the City and points beyond would continue to enjoy uninterrupted bay/ocean views. The project would thus result in a less than significant impact to scenic vistas. No mitigation is required.







**Impact 4.1-3: The project would allow building heights of up to eight stories, potentially creating new shadow patterns in the project area that could adversely affect the visual character of surrounding development. (Significant)**

Future developments in the project area of buildings of up to eight stories in height could create new shadow patterns in the project area. Although the Specific Plan would allow for building heights of up to five stories along West Broadway Avenue and Del Monte Boulevard, design standard *D.5.1* requires fourth and fifth stories to step back from the front setback of the building, reducing the overall building mass and the potential shadowing effect from upper stories. Buildings with heights ranging from one to five stories are not anticipated to cast shadows which would significantly impact existing surrounding development, as shadows cast would be of minimal size and of short duration as the sun moves throughout the day.

Shadows cast by buildings of eight stories in height would be larger in size and longer in duration than those cast by buildings up to five stories in height. These shadows would be mitigated in part by design standard *D.5.4*, which requires that upper floors of buildings eight stories in height (defined as above the third story) be set back at least 10 feet from the third story walls. This standard would result in a lesser shadowing effect for taller buildings but would nevertheless continue to result in the potential for significant shadowing effects on nearby properties.

These shadows would be most noticeable to surrounding developments during the late afternoon and early evening hours when the sun is lower in the sky, and would primarily affect developments to the east of the lots allowing for eight story buildings. Shadows cast earlier in the day would fall on public streets and would not have the potential to affect surrounding developments. The areas that would be potentially affected by these shadows are within the project area and are themselves proposed to be redeveloped with higher density residential and mixed-use developments. These new developments would be designed to take best advantage of the site, and would thus minimize this impact through the design of quality developments, as guided by the policies, development standards, and design guidelines included as part of the project. If the lots allowing for eight story buildings are redeveloped prior to adjacent lots to the east being redeveloped, the new buildings could result in shadow impacts that degrade the visual character on adjacent lots. New eight story buildings would cast shadows in the late afternoon and early evening hours negatively effecting existing developments located to the east, resulting in a potentially significant impact, requiring mitigation.

**Mitigation Measure 4.1-3:** Prior to the issuance of land use or building permits for the proposed development projects that include buildings greater than five stories in height, the City Resource Management Services Division shall confirm that the project applicant(s) have performed shadow studies to identify the potential for impacts resulting from shadows cast onto adjacent or non-contiguous private properties containing existing developments. The City Resource Management Services Division shall ensure that shadow minimization and/or avoidance measures included in any shadow studies are incorporated into development plans as conditions of project approval or as mitigation measures within project-level environmental

documentation. Such strategies may include, but are not limited to recommended alterations in site planning, building design, or building composition.

***Significance after Mitigation:*** Owing to the limited number of potentially affected parcels in the project area that would be affected by buildings taller than five stories, the anticipated limited temporal duration of such shadow impacts on private properties, and the lack of adopted CEQA or City thresholds regarding shade and shadow, the incorporation of feasible mitigation and/or avoidance measures from subsequent shadow studies would be considered to mitigate potential shade and shadow impacts to area visual character to a less than significant level.

**Impact 4.1-4: Implementation of the project would introduce new sources of light and glare. (Less than Significant)**

The project would facilitate new development at a greater height than currently exists in the project area. New development would include nighttime exterior illumination elements, including streetlights, storefront lighting, pedestrian oriented lighting, lighting for signs and lighting for public plazas. Lighting elements are particularly encouraged by Specific Plan Policies UD-2, PR-1, and PR-3, which encourage “well-lit open spaces” and “pedestrian level lighting.” These elements would create new sources of nighttime light in the project area and have the potential to result in an overall increase in light spread and illumination.

Residential areas adjacent to the southern boundary of the project area would not experience a significant increase in light or glare as a result of project elements, as the density and land use pattern would gradually transition from the urban core to mostly residential uses along the borders of existing residential neighborhoods.

In order to reduce the potential for impacts from light and glare associated with future development in the project area, the Specific Plan includes development standards (referenced in the discussion below) to reduce potential impacts.

Project lighting standards will regulate new light sources in the project area, such that new sources do not “impact adjacent development or the night sky” (*D.8*). Exterior lighting is to be used “only as necessary” with “the minimum light setting required to provide adequate security and safety.” Fixtures would be required to be focused downward and have “cut-off shading to resist light leakage” (*B.9.7.5*). Lighting would be required to be positioned in “a manner that will reduce or avoid glare” (*B.9.7.6*). Commercial mixed use development and gateway features include additional specific standards intended to limit the amount of illumination created as to not impact adjacent areas. Adherence to these standards and their incorporation into future development projects in the project area will ensure that impacts resulting from light spread and nighttime glare will be less than significant. Notably, these policies may require that individual development proposals include detailed lighting studies to ensure compliance.

Increased building height would place glass and other reflective surfaces at higher levels in the project area and could result in daytime glare. Development standards would require upper floors have a setback of at least eight feet from the lower levels, for massing of a maximum of three stories of the same setback on the lower levels (*B.5.1 – B.5.4*). In addition to the step back,

reflective glazing would be prohibited in residential areas by development standard *E.2.5.6*. The required step back and prohibition on reflective glazing would reduce the potential for new windows and other reflective building elements at higher heights to adversely affect views in the area, reducing this potential impact to less than significant. With adherence to project policies, no mitigation is required; but as noted above, compliance with these policies may require individual lighting studies for future development projects. No mitigation is required.

## Cumulative Impacts

For a discussion of cumulative impact methodology and the projects considered in this cumulative analysis, please see **Chapter 4.0, Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures**.

The area considered for cumulative impacts to aesthetic resources includes the project area and the remainder of the City of Seaside. The methodology used for evaluating cumulative impacts related to aesthetics utilizes the list of past, present, and probable future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, as identified in **Table 4.1**. The project and certain cumulative projects would result in additional infill development that would alter the overall visual character of the City both positively (i.e. through the implementation of new visual treatments) and adversely (i.e. with increased building heights altering the existing visual character). In many cases, future cumulative projects would replace deteriorating, vacant, or underutilized buildings within the City. The project, along with these other infill projects, would thus result in beneficial visual effects by improving the overall visual character of the City.

The project would allow buildings of up to eight stories in height at the intersection of Canyon Del Rey Boulevard and Del Monte Boulevard. Excepting the proposed 95 room, six-story Del Monte Hotel, proposed to be located west of the existing 12-story Embassy Suites Hotel, in between Laguna Grande and Roberts Lake, no other buildings in excess of 5 stories in height are expected in the City and immediately surrounding areas. As discussed above in reference to Impact 4.1-2 (Impacts to views from within and outside the project area), the limited extent of such taller buildings in and outside of the project area would not substantially impede scenic vistas from public vantage points at higher elevations of the City, nor would they impose significant shadow effects on sensitive areas, such as parklands or residential areas. Moreover, policies in the Specific Plan and the City's General Plan provide direction and guidance to minimize impacts to visual character, including requirements in the plan area for detailed shadow studies to minimize shadowing impacts. These buildings' cumulative impacts in terms of shade/shadow and visual character are thus not considered significant.

Light and glare impacts, while largely site specific, also contribute to night sky impacts. The project in combination with the cumulative projects would add new sources of nighttime lighting to the City. Because the majority of the cumulative projects replace existing development, the cumulative increase to night sky impacts would not be substantial. The Main Gate, 26 acre Lightfighter Drive project, and the Southeast Sector Planning Areas are the only "greenfield" developments among the cumulatively considered projects; all other projects would replace existing development. However, all three of these so-called "greenfield" projects are

immediately adjacent to existing urbanized areas on at least one side. Night sky impacts of these projects, similar to the Specific Plan, would be addressed by implementation of City policies to reduce night sky pollution, thus limiting the cumulative potential for spillover lighting impacts that affect the night sky in the City generally. The cumulative light and glare impacts would therefore not be considered significant.