

## V. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

### A. AESTHETICS

Aesthetic impacts for the Project have been evaluated under three general categories: 1) Visual Qualities, which addresses the general aesthetic value and view impacts relative to the surrounding neighborhood, 2) Lighting, which considers Project night-time illumination or glare impacts on the surrounding neighborhood, and 3) Shading, which evaluates daytime shading impacts resulting from construction of the Project.

#### 1. Visual Qualities

The Visual Qualities analysis in this Section addresses the two issues of aesthetic character and alteration of views. Aesthetic impacts are evaluated in terms of the Project's visual compatibility with the surrounding environment, given scale, and image or character of the area. Views are addressed in order to determine if the Project would affect any valued public views. This evaluation takes into consideration the Project as described in Section III. Project Description, including approval of all Project entitlement requests, the demolition of existing structures, and the construction of the Project.

#### Existing Conditions

The Project site is located within the Century City North Specific Plan (CCNSP) area of the West Los Angeles Community Plan. The Century City North Specific Plan provides for a mixture of high-rise commercial offices, high-medium density residential development, hotels and shopping uses. The Specific Plan area is bounded by Santa Monica Boulevard to the north, by the boundary between the City of Los Angeles and Beverly Hills to the east, by Olympic Boulevard to the south, and by Century Park West to the west.

The Project site currently contains a commercial complex consisting of two stone-covered rectangular eight-story buildings of modern design, with footprints measuring approximately 200 by 250 feet. The site also contains a diamond-shaped open-air plaza, the longer axis of which extends nearly 550 feet from end to end and the shorter axis approximately 250 feet. The existing site also contains a six-level parking facility below ground that provides parking for all the buildings on the site. In addition, the site includes two forty-four story office towers of triangular shape.

The rectangular street grid of Century City is not oriented along cardinal directions (north-south and east-west). Instead, Avenue of the Stars, Century Park East, and Century Park West are actually oriented in a northwest to southeast direction, however, for clarity these streets shall be hereafter referred to as running north to south. Similarly, Olympic, Santa Monica, and Constellation Boulevards will be hereafter referred to as aligned east to west when in actuality they are aligned northeast to southwest.

Land uses surrounding the site contain a mix of mid- to high-rise commercial and residential properties. A low-angle, oblique aerial photograph of the site vicinity illustrates the mix of building heights in the immediate site vicinity (**Figure AE-1**).

Residential structures are found along the entire southern side of Olympic Boulevard south of the Project site. These include the following complexes.

The Century Woods residential complex is located southwest of the proposed Project beyond the St. Regis and Century Plaza Hotels. The complex does not front along Avenue of the Stars but rather fronts along Olympic Boulevard and Century Park West.

**Figure AE-1 Aerial View of the Project Site Looking Northeast**

The Park Place condominium complex, located to the south of the Project consists of six (6) five-story structures. The buildings are tan in color with red tiled roofing. The complex has large trees and mature landscaping.

The Century Park East condominium complex is located southeast of the Project site at the corner of Century Park East and Olympic Boulevard. The complex consists of two rectangular-shaped high-rise buildings. The northern building has its longer side oriented towards Olympic Boulevard. The southern building is oriented towards Century Park East and setback from the street.

Commercial properties bound all of the western, northern, and eastern portions of the site (**Figure AE-2**). These include the following complexes.

The 44-story Century Plaza Towers located on the subject property and immediately east of the proposed area to be redeveloped are among the dominant features and visual focus of Century City. The towers are faced with tinted glass divided vertically by aluminum mullions. The towers nearly span the length of the block along Century Park East.

The 22-story Watt Towers are located to the north of the Project site. The complex consists of two high-rise office towers connected by a ground floor plaza area. The buildings are white in color and front onto Century Park East.

The 39-story SunAmerica building and its associated parking structure (1999 Avenue of the Stars) is located to the northwest, diagonally across the intersection from the Project site at Constellation Boulevard. The SunAmerica tower is faced with green and gold granite stone with dark tinted glass framed in gold toned aluminum frames. This building is generally rectilinear with a curved building front facing Constellation Boulevard and the Avenue of the Stars.

The 19-story Century Plaza Hotel is located west of the proposed Project on the opposite side of Avenue of the Stars. The curved hotel structure nearly spans the length of the block between Constellation Boulevard and Garden Lane.

The 30-story St. Regis Hotel is located on the west side of Avenue of the Stars north of Olympic Boulevard. The hotel lies southwest of the Project.

The 39-story Fox Plaza building, located immediately south of and adjacent to Olympic Boulevard, is another prominent modern high-rise building. It is surfaced with beige and brown-colored stone. The building fronts onto Avenue of the Stars.

Views in the Project area are dominated by urban features and not by any noteworthy natural terrain features. While the terrain is gradually sloping toward Santa Monica Boulevard along Avenue of the Stars, the grade change is not enough to materially affect the extent or content of viewsheds. Views of the site consist of and are limited by urban development concentrated in the commercial center that is Century City. Mature landscape trees located in surrounding building setback spaces, along Project-fronting streets, and in pedestrian plazas add to the obstruction of views of the Project site.

The aesthetic image and character of Century City is of a mixed-use center, with a prevailing contemporary architectural theme. The CCNSP does not identify any significant or “valued” scenic views or public vista points in the vicinity of the Project site. However, Avenue of the Stars is a City of Los Angeles designated scenic highway<sup>11</sup> and Class II bike path<sup>12</sup>. Avenue of the Stars is aligned north

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<sup>11</sup> Transportation Element of the City of Los Angeles General Plan Map E-Scenic Highways, Los Angeles Department of City Planning, June 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Transportation Element of the City of Los Angeles General Plan Map D-Non-motorized Transportation, Los Angeles Department of City Planning, April 1997.

**Figure AE-2 Views of the Project Area**

to south and is approximately 0.9 miles in length from Santa Monica Boulevard to Pico Boulevard. The character of the scenic corridor is cityscape. The cityscape environment consists of mid- and high-rise mixed-use buildings providing commercial, office, and residential space. The area includes dining, entertainment and shopping uses. Scenic amenities of Avenue of the Stars include landscaped medians, fountains, wide sidewalks, pedestrian bridge, natural and ornamental vegetation and views of the high- and mid-rise commercial structures (**Figure AE-3**). Public views of the site are available from immediately adjacent streets and sidewalks. These views are not available from long distances, due to intervening buildings, as will be described later in this section.

### **Threshold of Significance**

Using the City Thresholds Guide, along with the current CEQA Checklist (Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines) the following thresholds addressing aesthetics (visual character) and views (scenic views or vistas) have been determined to be applicable to the Project.<sup>13</sup> The proposed Project would result in a significant impact if it were to:

- Create a demonstrable negative aesthetic effect or substantially degrade the existing visual character by eliminating valued open space or a valued visual resource or by introducing a visual element incompatible, out of scale, in great contrast, or out of character with the surrounding area and its valued aesthetic image or character; and/or
- Substantially obstruct, block or intrude into a valued public view or provide a visual element that would considerably deter from a valued public view.

### **Project Impact**

#### ***Aesthetic Character***

This portion of the analysis addresses part one of the significance threshold, evaluating whether the proposed Project would degrade the existing aesthetic character of the area and/or otherwise result in a demonstrable negative aesthetic effect. To make this determination, the value of existing on-site development is first assessed to determine whether removal of these uses would result in a “demonstrable negative effect or substantially degrade the existing visual character.” Next, replacement with the proposed Project structures and uses is assessed to determine if they would introduce “a visual element incompatible, out of scale, in great contrast, or out of character with the surrounding area and its valued aesthetic image or character.”

#### Value of Existing Structures and Public Spaces

The subject property is currently developed with a commercial complex that includes office buildings, theaters, restaurants, and retail and health club space. These uses are contained within two eight-story buildings at 2020 and 2040 Avenue of the Stars and the two 44-story Century Plaza Towers at 2029 and 2049 Century Park East. A 3-acre plaza is located between the two sets of buildings. Mature ornamental trees and landscaping border the Project site, particularly along the southern perimeter.

The two eight-story buildings at 2020 and 2040 Avenue of the Stars were built in the early 1970's and are constructed of a tan colored travertine skin over a steel frame. While not visually distinctive or significant, these structures are visually consistent with and in character with the surrounding area.

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<sup>13</sup> City of Los Angeles Draft CEQA Thresholds Guide, May 14, 1998, City of Los Angeles Environmental Affairs Department (EAD). The Draft LA CEQA Threshold Guide is recommended by EAD as guidance to all City Departments in the preparation of environmental documents for new private development projects. The Guide states that for aesthetics and views, the determination of significance shall be made on a case by case basis, considering certain factors. The project Threshold of Significance takes into consideration, applicable factors in the Guide, as well as CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, which has been updated since issuance of the Threshold Guide.

**Insert Figure AE-3 View Along Avenue of the Stars**

The Century Plaza Towers are among the dominant features and visual focus of Century City. The towers are faced with tinted glass divided vertically by aluminum mullions. The towers nearly span the length of the block along Century Park East. While located on the subject property, the Project does not propose to remove or modify these buildings.

The plaza, located at the center of the property, consists of paved areas interspersed with benches, small trees in planters, and small built-in tree and flower gardens. The Project site gently slopes to the east, such that the plaza level is below grade at Avenue of the Stars and at grade on Century Park East. The plaza is pedestrian accessible from the pedestrian corridor below Avenue of the Stars connecting the site to the Century Plaza Hotel, and at street level from Avenue of the Stars and Century Park East. Currently the plaza is not easily accessible from either Olympic or Constellation Boulevards. While not visually distinctive or significant, the plaza is aesthetically consistent with the surrounding area.

The mature ornamental landscaping and trees, particularly those along Olympic Boulevard, serve to block views of the site from the south and contribute to the aesthetic character of the site.

#### Value of Replacement Structures and Public Spaces

The proposed 2000 Avenue of the Stars Project is a commercial mixed-use 15-story building of contemporary style architecture. The Project would provide class “A” office, retail, restaurant, and cultural space. The plaza level of the Project would contain all of the Project’s retail and restaurant space, representing 6.3% of the overall Project’s floor area. The street-level of the project would contain the office lobby, some office tenant space and a cultural facility. The 13 floors above the street level would provide office space. The Project would not include rooftop signage or other signage feature not typically found in Century City. All signage would be in compliance with City code. For a complete description of the Project site plan and its associated features, refer to Section III, Project Description.

Consistent with the architectural style common throughout Century City, the design of the proposed 15-story Project would be clean and modern in style, utilizing glass and steel as major materials. The Project incorporates the unique design element of a central opening in the structure. This design element gives the structure a landmark presence. The large opening is created by spanning between the two ends of the building at the upper and lower levels. From street level on Avenue of the Stars, this rectangular, open-air space would frame views of the two triangular Century Plaza Towers in the background. This detailing, along with perimeter landscaping and the enhanced landscaped plaza, would be utilized to soften building edges, avoiding a blank, boxy look. The architectural design of the Project is consistent with the existing aesthetic image and character of Century City, and therefore, would not represent a negative aesthetic effect.

The existing paved plaza would be replaced with a diamond shaped central lawn area, flanked by jacaranda and poplar trees along the northwest and southern edges. Additional rows of jacaranda trees would be planted between the lawn and the restaurant use on the north side of the Project. Pine trees would be planted on the slopes to the south and east of the cultural facility and on the east and west sides of the garage access from Constellation Boulevard. A pedestrian promenade would direct guests from Avenue of the Stars through the site, passing by benches, sitting areas, gardens, canopy trees, courtyards, and grassy slopes.

Project implementation would remove some landscape elements including all vegetation within the area to be redeveloped. Site investigations have identified a total of 113 trees that would be removed during construction. Of these, sixty-seven are mature trees with trunk diameters of twelve inches or greater. Forty-six have trunk diameters of less than twelve inches. The majority (nearly seventy-five percent) of trees to be removed are either ornamental fig trees (*Ficus sp.*), laurelleaf snailseed (*Cocculus laurifolius*), and London plane (*Plantanus acerifolia*) trees. The specific number of each tree

species to be removed is shown in Section V.C. Other trees to be removed include: Canary Island pine (*Pinus canariensis*), Brazilian pepper trees (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), evergreen pear trees (*Pyrus kawakamii*), goldenrain (*Koelreuteria paniculata*), coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*), sweet gum (*Liquidamber styraciflua*), sweetshade (*Hymensporum flavum*), and Chinese flame (*Koelreuteria bipinnata*).

Replacing this vegetation would be a diamond-shaped central lawn area, flanked by jacaranda and poplar trees along the northwest and southern edges. Additional rows of jacaranda trees would be planted between the lawn and the restaurant on the north side of the Project. Pine trees would be planted on the slopes to the south and east of the cultural facility and on the east and west sides of the garage access from Constellation Boulevard.

The loss of mature ornamental vegetation is a potentially significant impact. However, the Project includes a landscaping program which would expand the Project's landscaped areas and mitigate this impact to a less than significant level.

The Project's scale was also evaluated in relation to the surrounding area, in order to further assess visual character. The Project elevations and cross-sections in Section III, Project Description, **Figures PD-4 and PD-5** are helpful in this evaluation. The proposed 15-story structure would have an approximate height of 215 feet above grade at the plaza level, and 201 feet above grade on Avenue of the Stars. Two of the Project's 15 levels would be below grade at Avenue of the Stars.

A high-angle oblique aerial photographic simulation of the proposed building in the core of Century City allows a visual examination of the urban context of the Project's surrounding conditions (**Figure AE-4**). The illustration shows the proposed 15-story building in relationship to nearby high-rise structures. As illustrated, buildings of similar or much larger size would surround the proposed structure. The Project is of similar height to the nearby Century Plaza Hotel and shorter than the Watt Towers to the north and considerably shorter than the 44-story Century Plaza Towers to the east. In the foreground both the 39-story SunAmerica building, and 30-story St. Regis hotel are much taller than the proposed building. There are also many commercial and residential structures taller than the Project in the vicinity (not depicted in the figure). These include high-rise buildings such as the Fox Plaza building, the twin Century Park East condominiums and the under construction Constellation Place. In the context, the Project would be compatible with surrounding development.

In summary, the proposed Project site forms a part of a completely urbanized landscape in the heart of Century City. The existing eight-story structures and the adjacent open-air landscaped pedestrian plaza help to contribute to the local quality and character of the urban environment. The proposed single 15-story structure on a redesigned footprint would have a slightly greater setback from the Avenue of the Stars and present a narrower building profile facing Constellation Boulevard than the existing structures. The proposed landscaped plaza would be larger, include less hardscape and provide more access from the perimeter of the site. The design of the proposed building features openings at street-level and from lower to mid-level floors that would preserve visual links to the interior plaza and the Century Plaza Towers from Avenue of the Stars. The surface treatments, height, and visual massing effect of the completed structure and plaza would be in character with the surroundings and would not result in a degradation of the visual qualities or character of the site and surroundings.

Portions of nearby buildings such as the SunAmerica, Century Plaza Hotel, St. Regis Hotel, Park Place Condominiums, Century Park East Condominiums, and Watt Towers would have views of the construction related activities of the Project. Temporary visual impacts at the site would occur during the redevelopment process as they relate to construction activities and the removal of mature site-perimeter trees from existing landscaped areas that are part of the Project. Perimeter landscaping is also planned for the Project site.



**Insert Figure AE-4 Photosimulation of the Proposed Project**

The scope of the proposed Project, when viewed within its urban setting would be consistent with, and in scale with the surrounding development. The loss of mature on-site vegetation has the potential to significantly affect the visual character and quality of the site. Incorporation of mitigation measure AE-1 would reduce potential impacts to less than significant levels. Incorporation of mitigation measure AE-2 is included to further reduce potential impacts to the visual character and quality of the site.

### ***Alteration of Views***

This portion of the analysis addresses part two of the significance threshold, evaluating whether the Project would “substantially obstruct, block or intrude into a valued public view or provide a visual element that would considerably deter from a valued public view.” The CCNSP does not identify any significant or “valued” scenic views or public vista points in the vicinity of the Project site. However, Avenue of the Stars is a City of Los Angeles designated scenic highway and Class II bike path. Avenue of the Stars is aligned north to south and runs from Santa Monica Boulevard to Pico Boulevard. The character of this scenic corridor is cityscape and the aesthetic image includes scenic amenities such as landscaped medians, fountains, wide sidewalks, pedestrian friendly environments, ornamental vegetation, and views of the high- and mid-rise Century City commercial structures. This section will evaluate the degree to which current public views of the Project site are altered, and whether such alteration is in keeping with the “valued character” of Century City.

For this analysis, two different visual studies were undertaken; photorealistic simulations of the proposed Project, and a 3D digital terrain model analysis of the surrounding area.

For the simulations, photographs were taken from the surrounding area, and architectural renderings of the Project were placed into those photographs to simulate future views. The photographs include surrounding buildings to give context to the analysis. The new Project was modeled by Gensler Architects, based upon the Project plans.

The 3D digital terrain model analysis compared the changes in Project site visibility resulting from the proposed development within the context of the surrounding buildings. The analysis was prepared by Horizon Surveys based upon their collected data as will be discussed below.

#### Northerly View of the Project

The view of the proposed Project looking north from the intersection of Avenue of the Stars and Olympic Boulevard is demonstrated in **Figure AE-5**. The southern boundaries of the site border on a landscaped area containing a number of large mature trees. On all sides, the property abuts existing developed parcels, some with taller commercial buildings, forming relatively contiguous development along the street frontage on Avenue of the Stars.

West of Avenue of the Stars, buildings visible in the photograph are the Fox Plaza building, a small portion of the Century Plaza Hotel (behind the mature trees near Fox Plaza), and the SunAmerica building. Crossing Avenue of the Stars in the distance, the 1900 Avenue of the Stars, 10100 Santa Monica Boulevard, and 1801 Century Park East buildings are visible. East of the 2020 and 2040 Avenue of the Stars buildings are the Century Plaza Towers and a small portion of the Century Park East condominium tower.

In the simulated future view, the Project would remove the existing street frontage from the Project site and replace with a single taller building. The new building would be shorter than many of the surrounding buildings and of a design compatible with the SunAmerica, Fox Plaza, and Century Plaza Tower buildings in its architectural style and its design elements and detailing. As seen from this vantage point, the proposed Project would be visually compatible in terms of height and massing

**Insert Figure AE-5 Photosimulation of the Proposed Project Looking North from Avenue of the Stars and Olympic Boulevard**

with existing surrounding development. The future views from this angle would be in keeping with the valued character of Century City, and no significant view impact would occur.

#### Southerly View of the Project

The view of the proposed Project looking southerly from the pedestrian bridge, (which is elevated over Avenue of the Stars south of Santa Monica Boulevard) is demonstrated in **Figure AE-6**. The northern boundary of the site runs adjacent to Constellation Boulevard (the left turn lane is visible).

Just north of Constellation Boulevard is the City National Bank building at 1950 Avenue of the Stars. The large Charles Schwab office building at 1900 Avenue of the Stars is visible in the foreground at the left of the photograph. In the foreground on the right side of the photograph is the 1901 Avenue of the Stars office building. The Century Plaza Towers are located immediately east of the existing buildings. One of the Century Park East condominium buildings is visible in the gap between the two towers. West of Avenue of the Stars, the SunAmerica building and St. Regis Hotel can be seen. In the distance the Century Towers residential complex can be seen.

In the simulated future view, the Project would remove the existing street frontage from the Project site and be replaced with a single taller building. As seen from this vantage point, the proposed Project would be visually compatible in terms of height, massing and architectural design with existing surrounding development. The future views from this angle would be in keeping with the valued character of Century City, and no significant view impact would occur.

#### View Blocking Impacts from Surrounding Development

The 3D digital terrain model analysis compared the changes in Project site visibility resulting from the proposed development within the context of the surrounding buildings. The analysis included the preparation of a digital terrain model of the existing site and surrounding quarter mile radius. The model extracted locations and heights for all buildings, streets, and some trees within the study area into a three-dimensional computer-aided drafting drawing. In the model, viewpoints were analyzed from the roofline of the existing and proposed buildings. Roofline viewpoints represent the "worst case" in terms of increased building visibility over existing conditions. Visibility analysis was performed for each of the viewpoints and combined. The results were mapped onto rectified aerial photography (**Figure AE-7**). Blue shading in the figure represents areas with views of the existing structures. Purple shading represents areas which do not have views of the existing structures but would have views of the proposed building. Because the model is based primarily on terrain relief and building heights and locations, and does not include walls, or landscaping, site visibility in both cases is overstated.

The visual analysis indicates that because of the increased height of the proposed building compared to the existing structures, a few locations would gain views of the new structure that currently do not have views of the existing buildings. However, due to the concentration of off-site view-blocking structures, increased visibility is predominantly limited to street corridors that are variously oriented and "channeled" toward the Project. Views of the proposed building may be intermittently available from elevated windows through visual gaps between the taller buildings that surround the site.

Upper floors of Project-facing buildings in the Park Place condominium complex would gain views of the proposed building. The buildings that front Olympic Boulevard and are closest to the Project site tend to block or limit views of the Project site from adjacent buildings located toward the interior of the complex. In views where the Project may be seen, the building would be immediately flanked by the 44-story Century Plaza Towers to the east and be backed by the 39-story SunAmerica building.

Upper floors of Project-facing buildings in the Century Woods residential complex may gain intermittent views of the Project between the "gap" formed by the St. Regis and Century Plaza Hotels.

**Insert Figure AE-6 Photo simulations of the Proposed Project Looking South from Avenue of the Stars**

**Insert Figure AE-7 Comparison of Visibility of Existing and Proposed Structures**

The residential structures are clustered throughout the development in such a manner that many buildings located adjacent to others block any potential views of the site. Buildings closest to the development's perimeter and others facing internal street and common areas may have potential views of the site.

In summary, completion of the proposed Project would contribute to the density of buildings visible in the Century City skyline when viewed from foreground to middle-distant viewing locations. The high- and mid-rise structures that surround the Project site serve to block many views of the existing and proposed buildings. The proposed Project would be of a height and bulk consistent with such views, and constructed of materials appropriate for the modern urban landscape of Century City. The future views of the Project site would be in keeping with the valued character of Century City, and no significant view impact would occur.

#### **Mitigation Measures**

Incorporation of mitigation measure AE-1 would reduce the Project's potential aesthetic character impacts to less than significant levels. Incorporation of mitigation measure AE-2 is included to further reduce these impacts.

- AE-1** All open areas not used for buildings, driveways, parking areas, or walkways shall be attractively landscaped and maintained in accordance with a landscape plan, including an automatic irrigation plan, prepared by a licensed landscape architect to the satisfaction of the Los Angeles Department of City Planning.
- AE-2** The owners shall maintain the Project site to be clean and free of debris and rubbish and promptly remove any graffiti from walls, pursuant to Municipal Code Sections 91.810F, 91.8904.1, and 91.1707-E.

#### **Significant Project Impacts After Mitigation**

The proposed Project would not result in significant unavoidable impacts after the implementation of mitigation measures.

#### **Cumulative Impacts**

The proposed Constellation Place project located at the corner of Century Park West and Constellation Boulevard, would be visible in some of the same views as the proposed Project. These views would be limited, because of the size of the new building and the presence of the Century Park Hotel which is located between the two buildings, to pedestrians and motorists traveling on Constellation Boulevard. The taller buildings which surround the proposed building, of which the currently under construction 38-story Constellation Place building is one, serve to block views of or from the Project site. No other related projects are located close enough to the Project site to cumulatively contribute to the Project's overall less than significant after mitigation aesthetic impact, or to the Project's alteration of view impacts, which are less than significant in any case. Therefore, no significant cumulative impact on aesthetic character or alteration of views would occur.