

## **Section 4.1: AESTHETICS**

**EARVIN “MAGIC” JOHNSON RECREATION AREA MASTER PLAN  
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

## SECTION 4.1

### AESTHETICS, LIGHT AND GLARE

---

#### 4.1 AESTHETICS, LIGHT AND GLARE

This Section describes the environmental and regulatory settings of aesthetic and visual resources, as they pertain to implementation of the proposed Project. This section is based on information obtained from available public resources including, but not limited to, the *County of Los Angeles General Plan (1980)*, *City of Los Angeles General Plan (1995)*, *County of Los Angeles Park Design Guidelines and Standards (2014)*, and available Geographical Information Systems (GIS) data and maps.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

##### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

###### *REGIONAL SETTING*

The southern portion of the Los Angeles Basin, including parts of the City of Los Angeles and other communities in Los Angeles County (County), is highly urbanized. The land is mostly flat, with views of the Palos Verdes Peninsula to the southwest and the San Gabriel Mountains to the north. The Project site is near the communities of Willowbrook, West Athens, Lynwood, Watts, and Compton.

Regional access to the Project site is provided by Interstate 105 (I-105) approximately ¼ mile to the north and Interstate 110 (I-110) approximately 1 ¼ miles to the west. I-105, which runs in the east-west direction north of the Project site, connects with I-110, which runs north-south. The Project site is generally bounded by 120<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, Avalon Boulevard to the west, El Segundo Boulevard to the south, and Clovis Avenue to the east.

###### *SURROUNDING LAND USES*

The Project site is surrounded by the following land uses:

**North:** To the north, the Project site is bordered by post-World War II-era one- and two-story detached housing along 120th Street in the City of Los Angeles, as well as small one- and two-story apartment buildings.

**South:** To the south, the Project site is bordered by the Los Angeles Adventist Academy on El Segundo Boulevard, as well as a small shopping center, and single-story post-World War II-era single family detached housing.

**East:** To the east, the Project site is bordered by the former Ujima Village Apartment Complex (UVA) site, which has been demolished down to its foundation, and the UHC site. To the northeast, there are one- and two-story post-World War II-era single family detached residences accessed from S. Central Avenue.

**West:** To the west, the Project site is bordered by similar housing found to the northeast, bounded by Avalon Road on the west; a church; a Social Security Administration office; View Heights Convalescent Hospital; and the Animo Watts Charter High School.

#### *PROJECT SETTING*

The Project site is located largely within the unincorporated County, with a small section at the northern end of the site within the boundaries of the City of Los Angeles. Single-family residences are located near the Project boundaries on all sides and there is commercial development interspersed to the west, south, and east. Animo Watts Charter High School is located to the southwest, as are several churches. The Los Angeles Adventist Academy and Centennial High School are located to the south and southeast, respectively. There are no open spaces or undeveloped, natural areas immediately surrounding the Project site or in the immediate vicinity.

South of the former UVA site is a series of abandoned trailers that formerly belonged to the UHC site, along with several soccer fields.

EMJ Park itself contains two artificial lakes that are connected by a concrete drainage channel, which are often used by community residents for fishing. Each lake includes a

small island that is not connected to the shore. There is a parking lot on the southeast corner of the existing EMJ Park, and a second parking lot is in the northeast corner adjacent to 120<sup>th</sup> street. EMJ Park also contains walking trails, playgrounds, and open fields for activities such as soccer. A utility right-of-way easement (APN 6086031273), owned by the County Department of Water and Power (LACDWP), is also located on the Project site. It presently serves as a utility corridor for overhead electrical transmission lines. No development is proposed to occur within the easement. Additionally, during Project design, the County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) will conduct ongoing coordination with LACDWP to ensure standard design protocols (setbacks, design guidelines, etc.) are adhered to with respect to the easement.

The former UVA site has been demolished to its concrete foundations and is surrounded by chain-link fencing. The rest of EMJ Park consists of non-native trees and landscaped grasses, along with some non-landscaped dirt areas on EMJ Park’s western edge. Photographs of these viewpoints are shown in Exhibits 4.1-1, *Site Photographs A*, 4.1-2, *Site Photographs B*, and 4.1-3, *Site Photographs C*.

The Project site can be characterized as relatively flat, mostly developed as parkland, with the former UVA site housing remnants adjacent to the east, and completely surrounded by dense urbanization.

## **VISIBILITY**

The Project site is visible from adjacent areas given the relative flatness of the site, the large size, and the open nature of the existing EMJ Park. Development of the Project site would be highly visible from surrounding areas.

## **LIGHT AND GLARE**

There are two (2) typical types of light intrusion. First, light emanates from the interior of structures and passes out through windows. Second, light projects from exterior sources, such as street lighting, security lighting, and landscape lighting. “Light spill” is typically defined as the presence of unwanted and/or misdirected light on properties adjacent to the property being illuminated.

Glare is the sensation produced by luminance within the visual field that is significantly greater than the luminance to which the eyes are adapted, which causes annoyance, discomfort, or loss in visual performance and visibility.

The EMJ Park and the surrounding area currently have typical ambient nighttime light levels for an urban area. Artificial light in this area is produced by many sources, including street lights, automobile headlights, and interior and exterior lighting from houses and commercial buildings.

The EMJ Park consists primarily of features typically found in urban parks, such as lakes, open fields, and trees. There is existing security and bathroom lighting that presents very limited potential for glare and new sources of light or shadows.

## SCENIC ROUTES

There are no Officially Designated State or County Scenic Highways within the vicinity of the Project area. See below for discussion of the California Scenic Highway Program.

## SCENIC VISTAS

The County contains many undeveloped tracts of land that offer significant scenic vistas, as they contrast against developed urban areas. The *County of Los Angeles General Plan* (1980) provides policies to protect the visual quality of scenic areas, noted specifically below, that involve protecting views from public roads, trails, and key vantage points. Although the existing EMJ Park is open space and of a scenic nature, the Project site is not considered a protected scenic vista.





Looking east from the park to former Ujima Village.



Looking east at northernmost portion of former Ujima Village.

3/25/2015 J:\M:\data\140796\MXD\ER4.1-1 Site Photos A.mxd



**Michael Baker**  
INTERNATIONAL

Source: RBF Consulting

EARVIN "MAGIC" JOHNSON PARK MASTER PLAN  
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

## Site Photographs A

Exhibit 4.1-1

*This page was intentionally left blank.*





Looking west at the South Lake.



Looking west at the North Lake.

3/25/2015 JN:M:\data\140796\MXD\ER4.1-2 Site Photos B.mxd



**Michael Baker**  
INTERNATIONAL

Source: RBF Consulting

EARVIN "MAGIC" JOHNSON PARK MASTER PLAN  
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

## Site Photographs B

Exhibit 4.1-2



*This page was intentionally left blank.*





Looking north from within the park at existing walking trail.



Looking east from Avalon Boulevard toward west side of Park.

5/11/2015 JUN M:\Mdata\140796\MXD\ER4.1-3 Site Photos C.mxd



**Michael Baker**  
INTERNATIONAL

Source: RBF Consulting

EARVIN "MAGIC" JOHNSON PARK MASTER PLAN  
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

## Site Photographs C

Exhibit 4.1-3



*This page was intentionally left blank.*



## REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

### FEDERAL

No Federal laws, regulations, or executive orders apply to scenic resources within the Project area.

### STATE

#### *CALIFORNIA SCENIC HIGHWAY PROGRAM*

The California Scenic Highway Program was created in 1963 to preserve and protect highway corridors located in areas of outstanding natural beauty from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of the adjacent lands. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) designates highways based on how much of the landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which views are compromised by development.

The California Scenic Highway Program is governed by the regulations found in the Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et seq. Section 261 requires local government agencies to take the following actions to protect the scenic appearance of the scenic corridor:

- Regulate land use and density of development;
- Provide detailed land and site planning;
- Prohibit off-site outdoor advertising and control of on-site outdoor advertising;
- Pay careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping; and
- Scrutinize the design and appearance of structures and equipment.

A highway may be designated “scenic” depending on how much of the natural landscape travelers can see, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes on travelers’ enjoyment of the view. Official designation requires a local jurisdiction to enact a scenic corridor protection program that protects and enhances scenic resources (Caltrans 2005).

As discussed above, there are no Officially Designated State or County Scenic Highways within the vicinity of the Project area.

There are no other State regulations regarding aesthetic impacts that are applicable to the Project.

## LOCAL

### *COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PARK DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS*

The *County of Los Angeles Park Design Guidelines and Standards* (June 2014) was created to ensure County parks and trails were well planned, designed, constructed, and preserved for the residents and visitors of the County. The County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is comprised of the planning and development agency and holds the *County of Los Angeles Park Design Guidelines and Standards*. Under the *County of Los Angeles Park Design Guidelines and Standards*, parks incorporate a range of benefits for the community that allow a space for people to gather, be physically active, socialize, build community, and relax. The goal of the *County of Los Angeles Park Design Guidelines and Standards* is: (1) to provide a guide for design professionals and field agency staff in the development of new park and refurbishment projects; and (2) provide guidelines for the implementation of sustainable practices.

### *COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES GENERAL PLAN (1980)*

#### Conservation and Open Space Element

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>Policy 16</b> | Protect the visual quality of scenic areas including ridgelines and scenic views from public roads, trails and key vantage points. |
|------------------|--|

#### General Policies

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Policy 19</b> | Revitalize declining portions of existing urban development, with particular attention to deteriorated industrial and low income residential areas. |
| <b>Policy 21</b> | Promote compatible, environmentally sensitive development of bypass vacant land in urban areas.   |

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Policy 25</b> | Foster community identity and improve environmental quality by the compatible interrelation of a system of centers, major transportation facilities, and open space areas.  |
| <b>Policy 34</b> | Encourage the maintenance of landscaped areas and pollution-tolerant plants in urban areas. Integrate landscaping and open space into housing, commercial and industrial developments especially in urban revitalization areas. Use drought-resistant vegetation. |
| <b>Policy 35</b> | Support preservation of heritage trees. Encourage tree planting programs to enhance the beauty of urban landscaping.  |

## IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

### METHODOLOGY

An assessment of visual impacts was prepared by evaluating the existing visual setting and comparing it to visual conditions assumed to occur under the proposed Project. The EMJ Park and surrounding land uses were observed and photographic documentation was taken to determine the short- and long-term visual effects of the proposed Project.

### THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following thresholds of significance are based, in part, on CEQA Guidelines Appendix G. For purposes of this Draft EIR, implementation of the Project would be considered to have a significant impact on aesthetics if it would do any of the following:

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



## PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

<i>Threshold:</i>	<i>Would the Project have substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?</i>
-------------------	---

**Impact 4.1-1            Implementation of the Project would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. This impact would be *less than significant*.**

The vicinity of the Project area is highly urbanized and completely built out. The Project site itself is already developed as a public park. However, the existing EMJ Park is passive in nature, and few formal facilities and/or amenities exist. Currently, the only buildings that exist on the Project site are three restrooms. Additionally, the LACDWP transmission lines are an existing visual element located north-south within a 100' wide easement. The Project proposes improvements and modifications to the existing EMJ Park, which would alter the pastoral feel of the park due to an increase in active uses. Multiple buildings are proposed that would house various recreational amenities. Additionally, outdoor features, including a dog park, skate park, amphitheater, active water uses, and play areas, would alter the existing EMJ Park to a much more active open space area. Building heights associated with new development in the Project area would not exceed 30 ft., so as not to disrupt existing views within the Project area. It should also be noted that these proposed maximum building heights would not be taller than the building heights of the former UVA site. The Project includes the addition of new features that would generally benefit the aesthetics of the site, including new water features and the demolition of the remnants of the former UVA site.

The renovation of EMJ Park includes a 21,000 sq. ft. gymnasium, with most of the interior consisting of two basketball courts. This is a larger building than any currently existing at the Project site, but would not be taller than 30 ft. to ensure that existing views into and out of the Project site are preserved. Improvements would also include a ten acre equestrian center to be built on the west side of EMJ Park. As this feature would only rise 10-15 ft. above ground level, it is not expected that the equestrian center would disrupt views in the Project area.

The proposed Project would also include the construction of an 11,000–12,000 sq. ft. aquatic center, which would include locker rooms, offices, and classrooms. Like the other buildings proposed on the site, this building would not exceed 25 ft. in height, so as to preserve the visual character of the neighborhood. The swimming pools would be uncovered, totaling 18,057 sq. ft. in size, and would essentially be located at ground level.

The Project also includes the construction of a multi-purpose stadium to be built on two acres, including restrooms, a ticket booth, and concession stands. The only aspect of this feature that would potentially exceed 30 feet would be the lighting for nighttime activities. However, this lighting would be suspended from poles which would not disrupt scenic vistas at EMJ Park. Additionally, and the candle intensity of this lighting would be directed to minimize impacts to surrounding uses.

The proposed amphitheater would also not rise to a height that would disrupt scenic vistas, as it would mostly lie under the current ground level at the Project site. Other features of EMJ Park such as athletic fields, basketball courts, play areas, and a skate park would also not affect scenic vistas in the area, as these features are consistent with current land uses at the Project site. Implementation of the proposed Project would not have an adverse effect on a scenic vista and impacts would be less than significant.

As previously discussed, the Project proposes improvements and modifications to the existing EMJ Park, which would alter the pastoral feel of the park due to an increase in amenities and active uses to a much more active open space area. The design of the new amenities and buildings would utilize current architectural standards with design features that are complimentary to the architectural designs exhibited in the existing surrounding communities. The landscaping design would be based on current landscape architectural standards and designs, incorporating plant palettes and other design elements that are both water wise and complementary to the architecture of the proposed park amenities and buildings as well as the surrounding communities. Therefore, implementation of the proposed Project would significantly alter the aesthetics of the site in a beneficial way.

As previously discussed in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, the Project would be developed in phases. During the construction of the various phases, other portions of the EMJ Park would still be operational. Construction of the Project may create temporary visual and aesthetic disturbances associated with construction activities. Exposed surfaces, construction debris, equipment and truck traffic may temporarily impact views adjacent to the site. Storage of construction equipment in clusters within the designated staging areas would help to alleviate temporary construction-related visual impacts, and construction staging areas would be located away from residential properties. Potential construction-related impacts are expected to be minimal and would be minimized with adherence to local regulations pertaining to construction. Construction-related impacts are short-term and would cease upon Project completion. Therefore, construction-related impacts relative to aesthetics and scenic vistas would be less than significant.

<i>Threshold:</i>	<i>Would the Project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?</i>
-------------------	--

**Impact 4.1-2      Implementation of the Project would not substantially damage scenic resources. This impact would be *less than significant*.**

There are no state scenic highways in the Project area or its vicinity and the site does not include rock outcroppings or historic buildings. Therefore, implementation of the proposed Project would not result in substantial damage to rock outcroppings or historic buildings along a scenic highway. In addition, although the proposed phased improvements would result in the removal of existing trees in EMJ Park, the Project site would be re-landscaped and new trees would be planted. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.



<i>Threshold:</i>	<i>Would the Project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?</i>
-------------------	---

**Impact 4.1-3      Implementation of the Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. This impact would be *less than significant*.**

See the response to Impact 4.1-1, above. The Project site is currently a large public park surrounded on all sides by dense urbanization. The proposed Project would completely renovate the existing EMJ Park by providing new amenities and facilities, as well as new landscaping, and expand its footprint onto areas that are currently vacant and in various stages of demolition with fencing. The design of the new amenities and buildings would utilize current architectural standards with design features that are complimentary to the architectural designs exhibited in the existing surrounding communities. The landscaping design would be based on current landscape architectural standards and designs, incorporating plant palettes and other design elements that are both water wise and complimentary to the architecture of the proposed park amenities and buildings, as well as the surrounding communities.

Construction of the Project may create temporary visual and aesthetic disturbances associated with construction activities. Exposed surfaces, construction debris, equipment and truck traffic may temporarily degrade the existing visual character of the site. However, potential construction-related impacts are expected to be minimal and would be minimized with adherence to local regulations pertaining to construction. Construction-related impacts are short-term and would cease upon Project completion. Therefore, construction-related impacts relative to the existing visual character of the site would be less than significant.

Implementation of the proposed Project would significantly alter the aesthetics of the site in a beneficial way; therefore, the Project would improve the existing character and visual quality of the site. Impacts would be less than significant.

<i>Threshold:</i>	<i>Would the Project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?</i>
-------------------	---

**Impact 4.1-4      Implementation of the Project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views. This impact would be *less than significant*.**

The Project consists of improvements to the existing EMJ Park and would result in several new sources of light on the Project site. These include increased security lighting, stadium lighting, building lighting, and an increase in vehicular traffic in and around the Project area. The new lighting associated directly with the Project improvements would be required to comply with existing County ordinances governing light pollution and the *County of Los Angeles Park Design Guidelines and Standards* as outlined in the regulatory framework above, such as ensuring lights are downward-facing. An increase in security lighting would provide safety for additional traffic that would occur with Project implementation. Exterior security lighting would be installed in all parking lots, restroom buildings, and primary walkways throughout the site. All lighting for security would use high-efficiency lighting with low cutoff angles and downward-facing lighting, reflective-type lighting fixtures to reduce or eliminate glare, and would include a no direct-beam of exterior lighting at the property line to reduce light and/or glare on surrounding nighttime views. Utility lighting for the park design would include features such as electrical panels oversized by 30% for future expansion, light poles for parking lots and walkways at 30 feet in height on concrete bases, time programmable switches with battery backup device for all exterior lights, and provide interior restroom movement sensors for all restroom lighting systems.

The Project would convert large amounts of open grassy areas into active recreational uses with multiple types of facilities and buildings that would include new sources of lighting. The sources of lighting would use high efficiency lighting with low cutoff angles and downward-facing lighting and reflective-type lighting fixtures to reduce or eliminate glare. Recreational field lighting would use reflector shield systems to reduce off-field light spill, and any light poles near a playing area that are not protected by a fence would

have six-feet-high pole pads. The lighting of the new amenities and buildings would be consistent with the *County of Los Angeles Park Design Guidelines and Standards* for lighting to ensure the new sources of lighting in EMJ Park would not adversely affect adjacent residential areas.

In addition, because the Project would improve and expand an existing park that is surrounded on all sides by high-density development, the overall effect on light and glare in the wider Project vicinity would be significant. However, the design of the new amenities and buildings would utilize shielding to ensure the new sources of lighting in EMJ Park would not adversely affect adjacent residential areas. Therefore, potential impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level.

## CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

An evaluation of whether an impact on aesthetic resources, including light and glare, would be substantial must consider both the resource itself and how that resource fits into a regional or local context. Substantial impacts would be those that substantially diminish or result in the loss of an important aesthetic resource, or those that would conflict with local, State, and/or Federal plans, goals, or regulations.

As previously discussed, the Project proposes improvements and modifications to the existing EMJ Park which would alter the pastoral feel of the park due to an increase in active uses. The design of the new amenities and buildings would utilize current architectural standards with design features that are complimentary to the architectural designs exhibited in the existing surrounding communities. The landscaping design would be based on current landscape architectural standards and designs, incorporating plant palettes and other design elements that are both water wise and complimentary to the architecture of the proposed park amenities and buildings, as well as the surrounding communities. Therefore, implementation of the proposed Project would significantly alter the aesthetics of the site in a beneficial way.

Although the new amenities would include new sources of lighting, the new light sources would be consistent with the *County of Los Angeles Park Design Guidelines and Standards*.



Only lighting that is shielded and can be directed in such a way as to not adversely affect adjacent residential uses would be used. Because the Project would result in beneficial aesthetic impacts, and does not conflict with any existing local, State, or Federal goals, policies, or regulations, cumulative impacts on aesthetic resources as a result of the Project would be less than significant.