

4.1 AESTHETICS & VISUAL QUALITY

4.1.1 Introduction

This section of the EIR describes existing visual and aesthetic resources for the project site and evaluates potential impacts of the project with respect to the proposed Specific Plan's changes in current land uses. An analysis of potential lighting effects also is provided. The City of Ontario General Plan goals and policies pertaining to aesthetics are described. The following impact analysis is based on information drawn from the City of Ontario General Plan, and the City of Ontario Development Code.

4.1.2 Environmental Setting

The Bates Company is proposing a Specific Plan referred to as Ontario Gateway Specific Plan for the development of a mixed-use master plan on approximately 41 acres located one block east of the LA/Ontario International Airport. The site is located in the City of Ontario, San Bernardino County. Approximately 60 percent of the proposed project site is paved and contains an approximate 200,000 square-foot metal industrial building (industrial/storage and distribution) and approximately 9,600 square feet of office space which is situated on the southern portion of the project site. The land on the northern one-third of the project site is vacant. The general area surrounding the project site is characterized by industrial, office, and retail commercial development reflecting the area's close proximity to the LA/Ontario International Airport and regional freeways.

Area-Wide Visual Character

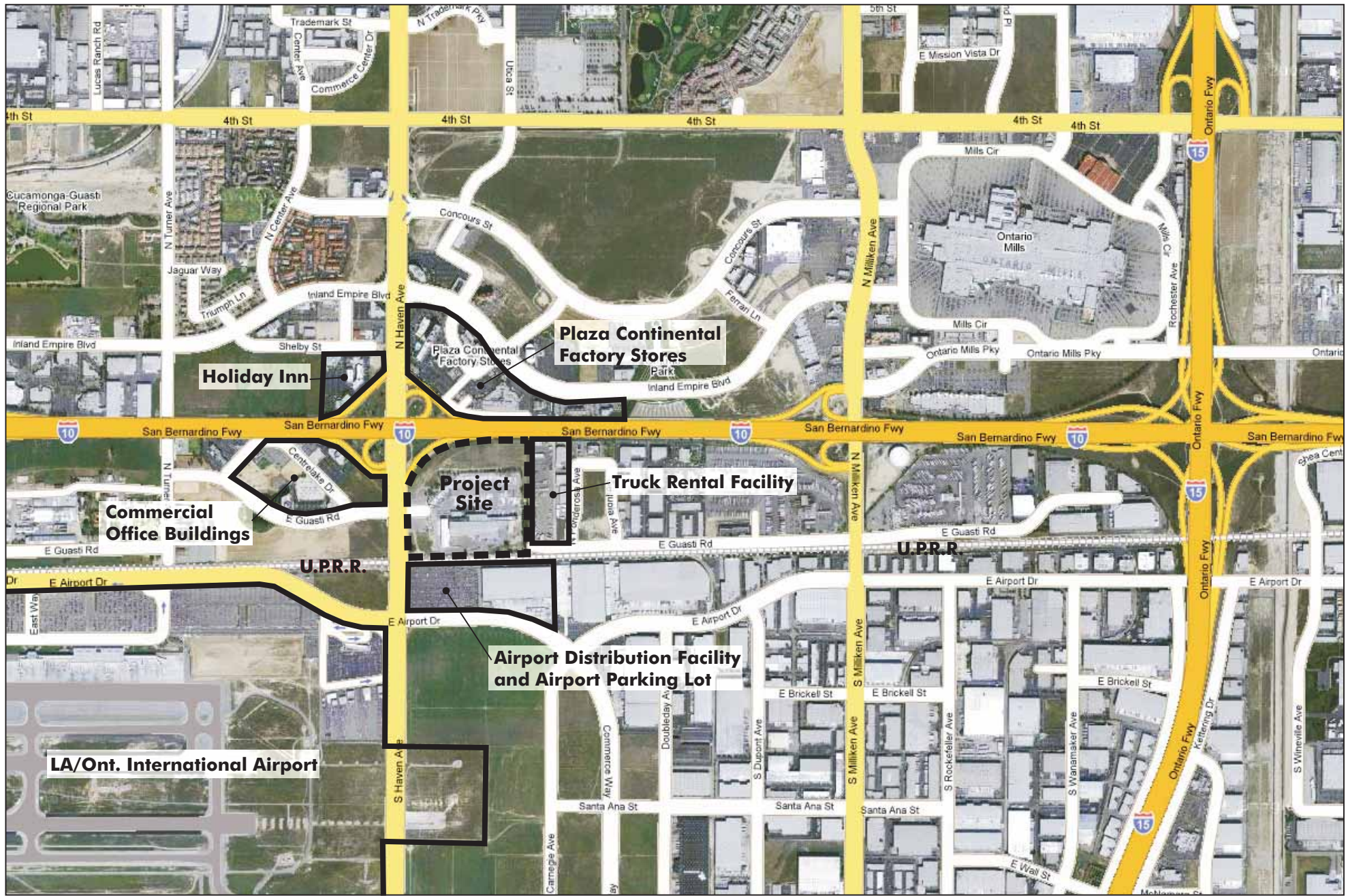
North – The view looking north is primarily of I-10 freeway. Commercial uses can be seen across I-10 to the north.

South – Located south of the proposed development is the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR). To the south of UPRR an airport distribution facility and an airport parking lot are visible.

East – Properties immediately east of the site include a truck rental facility. Most of the views to the east consist of trucks and industrial structures. Existing Eucalyptus windrows partially obstruct the views to the east.

West – Immediately west of the site a few office buildings can be seen at a distance across Haven Avenue.

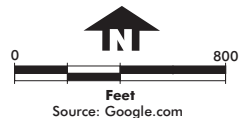
Figure 4.1-1 shows the land uses surrounding the project site.



Surrounding Land Use

Ontario Gateway Specific Plan
City of Ontario, California

Figure 4.1-1



Views of the Site From the Surrounding Area

From the North – Views from the I-10 Freeway to the north of the site consist of stacks of roofing material piled outside the building and trucks. However, considering the traffic speed on the freeway these views are for a short duration.

From the East – View of the existing industrial building is partially blocked by existing Eucalyptus windrows. Stacks of roofing material can also be seen from the east side of the project side.

From the South – The view from the south primarily consist of the roofing material building. The UPRR adjacent to the southern boundary of the project site partially obscures the views from the south.

From the West – The view from the west include views of trucks and the roofing material building.

Applicable Policies and Regulations

State

California's Scenic Highway Program preserves and protects scenic highway corridors from changes that would diminish their aesthetic value. There are currently no State designated or proposed scenic highways located within or near the City of Ontario, and no highways within the City have been proposed for scenic designation.

Local

City of Ontario General Plan

The City of Ontario has adopted various policies designed to ensure an attractive visual environment. The City's Aesthetic, Cultural, Open Space and Recreational Resources Element identifies Euclid Avenue as a visually sensitive corridor and specifies a number of needs to maintain and improve the aesthetic quality of the corridor. Other visual resources for consideration include the backdrop of the San Gabriel Mountains, which dominate the northern views from the city. Maintenance of these viewsheds will be considered and enhanced, if possible, as part of the development. In addition, cultural and historic resources would also be considered for the project. Following goals of the City's General Plan relate to visual and scenic resources:

Goal 5.0 Preserve and protect Ontario's scenic highways and vistas as community assets.

Policy 5.1: Require that new development respect and preserve the view opportunities of existing development in the area. Include view preservation standards in the Development Code.

Policy 5.6: Require, to the maximum extent feasible, the underground placement of utilities.

Policy 5.7: Require, to the maximum extent feasible, new development to landscape adjacent freeways and railroad rights-of-way.

In addition, the Community Development Element of the General Plan contains the following relevant goals and policies:

Policy 1.1: Permit only such new development as is compatible with the existing and planned growth of LA/Ontario International Airport, consistent with the Airport Environs Element of the General Plan.

Policy 7.9: Promote higher quality architectural design in new commercial and industrial buildings.

Locally the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance Article 26 of the Ontario Development Code regulates historic properties in the City. The purpose of the historic preservation program, as outlined in Section 9-1.2605 of the Ontario Municipal Code is to:

- Safeguarding the character and history of the City which is reflected in its unique cultural, historical, and architectural heritage, with emphasis on the "Model Colony" as recognized by an Act of Congress and presented at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904;
- Promoting the enjoyment and use of Historical Resources appropriate for the education and recreation of the people of the City;
- Enhancing the visual and aesthetic character, diversity and interest of the City;
- Recognizing Historical Resources and protecting areas of historical buildings from encroachment of incompatible designs;
- Protecting and enhancing the City's attraction to tourists and visitors.

4.1.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Project Related Views of the Site from the Surrounding Area

From the North – The proposed Office Planning Area 1 and Auto Planning Area would be visible from the I-10 and land uses further north of the freeway. The proposed office building within the Office Planning Area 1 could potentially be up to ten stories high. Potential structures within the Auto Planning Area would most likely be low rise. Other land uses to the south of Office Planning Area 1 and Auto Planning Area would be shielded or partly obscured by office building and auto related uses.

From the East – The light industrial uses to the west of the project site would primarily have views of the buildings related to auto uses within the Auto Planning Area and Flex-Medical

Office Buildings within the Office Planning Area 2. The potential office, hotel and hospital buildings west of Auto Planning Area and Office Planning Area 2 would also be visible.

From the South – The primary views from the south would potentially consist of a hospital or business related uses within the Mixed Use Planning Area. The proposed ten-story building within the Office Planning Area 1 would also be visible.

From the West – Drivers on Haven Avenue would see a large part of the proposed development that would potentially include hospital, hotel, and office buildings. The office buildings and restaurants that lie further west of Haven Avenue would have distant views of the proposed project.

Design Considerations

In order to reduce potential visual impacts to the surrounding area, specific design elements would be implemented within the Ontario Gateway Specific Plan project area. The design, detail, building materials, and colors of the new development as documented in the Specific Plan, would be compatible with the adjacent buildings. Building facades would include bay windows, balconies, arcades, towers, and other projections to avoid a monotonous appearance and/or overly horizontal composition. The mass of new structures, as viewed from public streets, would be softened by landscaping or lessened by small-scale elements such as windows, panels, and other detail features to avoid monotony in design. All buildings on site would provide the same architectural quality as other commercial buildings within the Specific Plan.

The entrance for office buildings would be a major focal point and readily identifiable from a distance. Parking structures would be designed and constructed to the same standard of quality as the uses they serve and would be integrated into the overall development, making them convenient, accessible and safe. Each proposed development plan submittal would be reviewed for its overall design, with allowances for individuality and special functional needs.

Thresholds of Significance

An impact to aesthetics and visual quality is considered significant if the project would:

- 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 project site and its surroundings; or
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Impacts Determined to Have no Impact

Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

Currently two-thirds of the project site is occupied by a steel building and one-third of the project site is vacant. The proposed project would replace the existing manufacturing building with more contemporary office, hospitality and other commercial buildings. The new development would be more visually pleasing and would enhance the character of the area.

Impacts Determined to be Potentially Significant

Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;

Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Impact AVQ-1

Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would result in additional visual massing from new buildings that could impact the current views of the mountains to the north. Also, the project site lies within a quarter mile of two sites that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. This is a potentially significant impact.

The existing scenic vistas from and through the project site are limited to the long-range views of the San Gabriel Mountains. Long distance views of these mountains to the north are limited to the views available through street corridors as existing buildings block or obstruct the views from other locations within and around the Specific Plan area. The Ontario Gateway Specific Plan proposes approximately 900,000 square feet of commercial space on the project site. Building height, in particular, could obstruct existing scenic views of the San Gabriel Mountains, which have been identified in the City's General Plan Aesthetic, Cultural, Open Space and Recreational Resources Element as valuable scenic resources. Building setbacks can also adversely affect views if they encroach upon the street too closely and are not adequate to allow existing views to remain.

The specific design of the development that would occur on the project site is not known; however, the proposed Ontario Gateway Specific Plan specifies standards and regulations that would guide future development of the project site. The objective of building design and site development within the Specific Plan area is to concentrate architectural detail toward public views, while promoting the interrelationship of the buildings through shared courtyard and open space area.

The most significant change in building heights under the proposed Specific Plan would occur in the Office Planning Area 1, where taller structures would replace vacant areas. However, the views of the San Gabriel Mountains would be maintained from the plazas and courtyards proposed as a part of the Ontario Gateway Specific Plan. A distribution facility and Airport parking lot lie to the south of the project site. Therefore, views of the mountains from the south could be obscured. However, given the nature of land uses to the south, they do not provide significant vista points. Therefore, the impacts would not be considered significant.

The City of Ontario General Plan identifies two sites: Guasti Winery and Hofer Ranch, that are of historic importance and are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; and lie approximately within one-quarter mile to the west and southwest of the project site, respectively. Different specific plans have been adopted for adaptive re-use for both of these historic sites. Both the Guasti Plaza Specific Plan and Hofer Ranch Business Center Specific Plan provide for the preservation of the existing complex of Hofer Ranch Buildings and also provide standards for new development that would be compatible with these buildings. The proposed land uses within these specific plans are similar to the proposed land uses within the Ontario Gateway Specific Plan. Therefore, no impact is anticipated as a result of the proposed project and no mitigation measures are recommended.

Impact AVQ-2

Implementation of the proposed Ontario Gateway Specific Plan would result in new sources and increased lighting and glare. This is a potentially significant impact.

Two-thirds of the project site is currently developed with light industrial uses that already generate light and glare. However, the proposed project would result in a more intensive development and also develop the northern one-third portion of the project site that is at present undeveloped.

Nighttime lighting used during construction would consist primarily of security lights, although lighting may be used for construction activities occurring during morning or evening hours, particularly in the winter. This lighting will be temporary in nature and would not result in any substantial long-term light or glare impacts.

New permanent exterior nighttime lighting would be used to highlight architectural elements, landscaping, and building tenant and project signage on new buildings developed under the Ontario Gateway Specific Plan area. Direct and indirect lighting used for new signage would be placed on development sites and/or on new building façades. Signage lighting would be focused onto sign surfaces and would generally be of low to medium brightness. In addition, security and safety lighting would be provided, as necessary, in parking areas and commercial building exteriors during and after commercial operating hours. Further, increased vehicular traffic resulting from the increase in commercial uses could result in more opportunities for vehicular headlights to affect existing light-sensitive uses along the surrounding streets.

The proposed project contains lighting standards for exterior lighting to be designed to limit spillage of light and glare beyond the boundaries of a parcel. The proposed project also contains architectural and landscape standards that would reduce the potential for generation of substantial glare. All proposed signage and associated lighting in the Specific Plan area will be subject to signage regulations included in the City of Ontario Municipal Code and/or the proposed Ontario Gateway Specific Plan and subject to the review and approval of the City. Therefore, lighting associated with signs would not result in substantial impacts affecting nighttime or daytime views.

There is currently substantial nighttime lighting in the surrounding areas of the project site, and the addition of new sources of permanent light and glare as a result of implementation of the Specific Plan would not significantly increase ambient lighting in the project vicinity. Moreover, due to the highly developed urban nature of the City, there is a significant existing amount of ambient light both in the Specific Plan area and in the immediately surrounding vicinity.

An exact tenant-mix for the proposed land uses is not known at this time and a complete assessment of site-specific lighting and glare impacts of proposed development under the Specific Plan is not possible. The following mitigation measures include provisions to ensure that lighting spillover would be minimized and glare impacts from reflective surfaces would be reduced or eliminated to the extent feasible. These mitigation measures would ensure that even with the most intensive land uses for the proposed project, the impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measure AVQ-1

Lighting fixtures constructed as part of new development shall be oriented and focused onto the specific onsite location intended for illumination (e.g., parking lots, driveways, and walkways) and shielded away from adjacent sensitive uses (e.g., hospitals) and public rights-of-way to minimize light spillover onto off-site areas.

Mitigation Measure AVQ-2

Ensure that lighting spillover onto adjacent sensitive uses (e.g., hospitals) shall be reduced by minimizing interior nighttime lighting of new development.

Mitigation Measure AVQ-3

Where appropriate and feasible, project design features shall be incorporated to shield light and/or glare from vehicles entering or exiting parking lots and structures that face sensitive uses (e.g., hospitals) by providing barriers so that light from vehicle headlights would not illuminate off-site sensitive uses.

Mitigation Measure AVQ-4

Where appropriate and feasible, project design features shall be incorporated to provide landscaping, physical barriers, screening, or other buffers to minimize project-generated illumination from entering off-site areas and to prevent glare or interference with vehicular traffic.

Mitigation Measure AVQ-5

To the extent feasible, driveways shall be located and oriented into parking lots, parking structures, and subterranean garages in a manner that will not result in headlights from vehicles entering or exiting the parking areas directly lighting any off-site sensitive uses.

Mitigation Measure AVQ-6

To the extent practical, the height of new lighting structures shall be minimized for surface parking areas, vehicular access ways, and walkways.

Mitigation Measure AVQ-7

To the extent feasible, proposed new structures shall be designed to maximize the use of textured or other non-reflective exterior surfaces and non-reflective glass.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Less than significant with mitigation.

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