

Section 4.14: Visual Quality and Aesthetics

4.14.1 Environmental Setting

Since the Guasti Plaza Specific Plan was approved in 1996, most of the structures on the project site have been demolished. The approximately 11.72-acre project site is currently largely vacant, with only seven historic structures and a trailer remaining north of Old Guasti Road. The historic structures along the alignment of Pepper Tree Lane are not in use, but a U.S. Post Office operates out of a relocatable trailer at the northeastern corner of the site.

Visual Quality

The project site has a relatively flat terrain, located within the western section of the San Bernardino Valley. The site is surrounded by a chainlink fence, with a number of mature trees scattered throughout. The fire station, 5 residential cottages, and market building are historic structures that have been mothballed and are located along the alignment of Pepper Tree Lane, north of Old Guasti Road. A relatively new relocatable trailer and paved area are used by the US Post Office at the southwestern corner of New Guasti Road and Turner Avenue. Non-native and ruderal vegetation species dominate the remaining open and disturbed areas. Street signage, power, telephone and utility infrastructure are present along the site perimeter at Turner Avenue, Old Guasti Road, and New Guasti Road. Recent demolition and clearing activities have left the ground highly disturbed, with debris piles and shallow excavations throughout. Figures 4.14-1, 4.14-2 and 4.14-3, *Site Photographs*, provide pictures of the project site and the existing structures.

Surrounding land uses include office buildings and vacant land to the north and east, a church, equipment facility, and an industrial use to the east and southeast, the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and Ontario International Airport to the south, and vacant land and the Guasti Mansion to the west.

Views

Views of the site are available on Turner Avenue, Old Guasti Road, and New Guasti Road. The views are defined by chainlink fences that surround the site, enclosing the abandoned structures and fenced out/boxed trees. Views from the site include the railroad tracks, airport parking and airport terminals to the south, adjacent office, industrial and church structures to the east, vacant land and the I-10 Freeway to the north, and the Guasti Mansion to the west. Distant views are dominated by the San Gabriel Mountains to the north.

Scenic Highways

There are no scenic highways near the project site, as designated by the City of Ontario, the County of San Bernardino, or the State of California. The nearest route eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway is a section of the I-10 Freeway from SR 38 (near Redlands) to SR 62 (near Whitewater). This route is located approximately 24 miles east of the site. The segment of the I-10 Freeway located just north of the project site is not eligible.

The Ontario Plan identifies the views of the San Gabriel Mountains as a scenic resource to be preserved on north-south streets in the City. The San Gabriel Mountains are visible from the project site and from the airport to the south.



Northern section of
Planning Area 2



Central section of
Planning Area 2



Planning Area 3
at southern
section

Figure 4.14-1 Site Photographs

Guasti Plaza Specific Plan Amendment
Supplemental EIR



US Post Office
at northeastern
corner of the
Planning Area 2



Guasti Market at Turner
Avenue and Old Guasti
Road



Residential bungalows
along alignment of
Pepper Tree Lane,
north of Old Guasti
Road

Figure 4.14-2 Site Photographs

Guasti Plaza Specific Plan Amendment
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Additional area for potential residential development at western section of the Guasti Plaza Specific Plan area



Residences on western section to be relocated along Pepper Tree Lane

Figure 4.14-3 Site Photographs

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Light and Glare

Sources of light in the area include exterior lighting at the US Post Office and existing industrial and office uses near the site, and streetlights along New Guasti Road. Other sources of light in the project area include headlights from passing vehicles on area roadways. No glazed or window surfaces are present at the vacant buildings on site. Screened glass windows are present on the north and south facades of the Post Office trailer.

4.14.2 Threshold of Significance

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project could have a significant adverse impact on aesthetics, if its implementation results in any of the following:

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

4.14.3 Environmental Impacts

Future residential development under the proposed Amendment would lead to changes in the visual quality of the project site.

Scenic Vista (Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?)

The San Gabriel Mountains to the north are considered by the City of Ontario as a scenic resource. The development of residential buildings on the project site would provide views of the mountains to future residents and visitors. At the same time, views of the mountains would change for land uses located south of the site. However, the UPRR railroad offers only passing views for moving trains and this view is available along the entire route of the UPRR tracks through Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties. Also, the airport parking area to the south of the tracks does not serve as a permanent viewer location, since users of the parking lot are present for only short segments of time, as they park or pick up their cars. Airport terminal users are located at least 900 feet from the south and will not have their views of the mountains obstructed. Rather, their foreground views would change from a largely vacant area to a developed site. This impact is considered less than significant.

Scenic Highway (Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?)

Future residential development would not affect views along scenic highways since the site is not visible from any scenic highway. There are no rock outcroppings on the site. However, the mature trees on the site are part of the Guasti community and are proposed for preservation, in accordance with the Specific Plan's tree preservation program and landscape plan. Additional trees would also be planted on the site to maintain the historic landscape theme. Thus, no major change to the visual quality afforded by the existing trees would occur.

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The mothballed structures along the alignment of Pepper Tree Lane have been determined to be historically significant and will be rehabilitated and reused. The conceptual interpretive program for the Guasti community shows that the structures would be part of a historic walking tour that would provide information on the historic Guasti community, including the reuse of the structures as a museum, meeting rooms, recreational amenities, and maybe as the relocation site for the US Post Office. Rehabilitation of these structures in accordance with the historic preservation program of the Specific Plan and as approved by the Ontario Historic Preservation Commission would prevent any adverse impacts related to changes in views of the historic buildings. This is discussed further in Section 4.10, *Cultural Resources*, of this SEIR. Potential changes in public views would not represent significant adverse impacts.

Visual Quality and Character (Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?)

Visual Quality

Future residential development on the site, as proposed under the Guasti Plaza Specific Plan Amendment, would change the visual quality of the project site. The primarily undeveloped condition of the site would change into an urban environment, consisting of residential structures, recreational and open space areas, parking lots/structures, and rehabilitated historic buildings. Preliminary proposals indicate 3- to 5-story buildings with 500 attached units would be developed on-site, increasing the density of development. Thus, the Amendment would lead to the introduction of several structures surrounded by improved landscapes and streetscapes. Proposed structures would reflect the architectural style of historic buildings, as promoted in the Guasti Plaza Specific Plan.

The determination of whether the changes in visual quality of the site would degrade the site or its surroundings, and thus, be significant and adverse, is highly subjective as some individuals prefer open and natural settings, while others prefer urban and improved environments. Similarly, preferences for old or new or one architectural style over another make it difficult to conclude that a development would have a negative or positive aesthetic impact.

Compliance with adopted design guidelines is expected to be in keeping with the aesthetic values of the City. Thus, if the City approves the proposed residential design guidelines under the Amendment, it is assumed that compliance with the design guidelines in the amended Specific Plan would be in keeping with the aesthetic standards for future residential development on the site. The City would have to review and approve the site plans for compliance with the development standards and design guidelines in the amended Specific Plan, prior to the approval of building permits. This will ensure that future residential development is consistent with the development anticipated under the amended Guasti Plaza Specific Plan and does not result in negative aesthetic impacts.

The change in visual appearance related to implementation of the Specific Plan Amendment and future residential development on the site would result in a major change in the visual quality of the site but is not expected to have a significant adverse aesthetic impact, assuming the development project complies with the residential design guidelines in the amended Specific Plan. Impacts would be less than significant.

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Visual Character

Residential land uses proposed under the Guasti Plaza Specific Plan Amendment would introduce a different building type and permanent viewers (residents) to the area, than previously anticipated with planned office and commercial uses.

The introduction of residential design guidelines as part of the Amendment could change the architecture of on-site structures from office to residential buildings. However, this change would still involve the introduction of new structures and would still create an urban environment. Preferences between building designs is highly subjective and changes in visual quality due to architecture could not readily be considered significant and adverse.

The proposed design guidelines for residential uses provide more consideration to the pedestrian-scale environment and would be more in tune to the views of on-site residents. Thus, the guidelines would enhance the pedestrian experience and would be beneficial.

The existing pepper trees along the alignment of former Pepper Tree Lane would be preserved on-site, in accordance with the Specific Plan. In addition, a number of oak, eucalyptus, olive, and other trees on site would be preserved in place or transplanted in accordance with the tree preservation program in the Specific Plan. This will not change under the proposed Amendment. The introduction of landscape standards for residential uses as part of the Amendment would change the plant palette previously anticipated with planned office uses. However, this change would still involve the introduction of landscaping plant materials. Preferences between landscaping materials is highly subjective and changes in visual quality due to landscaping could not readily be considered significant and adverse.

The proposed change in sign standards as part of the Amendment would change the signs previously anticipated within the Specific Plan area. However, this change would still involve the introduction of signs and would still create an urban environment. Preference between sign designs is highly subjective and changes in visual quality due to signs could not readily be considered significant and adverse.

Light and Glare (Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?)

Future residential development would create new sources of light and glare on the site. These would include streetlights on planned roadways within the site and the abutting roadways, exterior security lighting, lighted signs, parking lot lighting, and pedestrian pathway lighting. These new light sources would result in an increase in the lighting levels of the site over existing conditions. Increased lighting levels could impact adjacent land uses but nearby office and industrial uses, vacant land, and abandoned structures would not be adversely impacted. Light spillover may affect airport operations to the south but compliance with Article 29, *Airport Approach Zone*, and Article 33, *Environmental Performance Standards*, of the City's Development Code would require on-site lighting to be shielded or directed away from affecting airport operations. FAA review would also prevent adverse light impacts to the airport. This is discussed further in Section 4.13, *Human Health and Hazards*, of this SEIR.

Future residential development could also create new sources of glare in the form of glazed building surfaces, use of mirrors and glass as exterior building surfaces, and other reflective materials that would reflect the sun or light sources and create glare. Future development on the site would be required to submit building and lighting plans for design review and approval

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by the City. Compliance with the City's performance standards regarding light and glare and FAA review would prevent the creation of significant adverse light and glare impacts.

Vehicles going to and from the site during the nighttime hours would also introduce vehicle lights on roadways that may also affect on-site and nearby land uses. The Amendment includes additional lighting standards, with 3 additional goals and better ways to address light spillover and impacts on the airport, residential walkways, building security ordinance and specific standards for residential uses. Compliance with these standards would reduce the potential for light spillover. Light and glare impacts would not be significant and adverse.

4.14.4 Previous Analysis

To the extent applicable, this Supplemental EIR tiers off previous environmental documents relating to the development of the project site, which include the EIR for the Guasti Plaza Specific Plan and the EIR for the Guasti Redevelopment Plan. The following discussion summarizes the similarities/differences in potential impacts between the previous documents and this Supplemental EIR and, where similar impacts are present, applicable policies, standard conditions or mitigation measures in the previous documents are identified for incorporation or implementation by the current project, where appropriate.

Guasti Plaza Specific Plan EIR

The EIR prepared for the Guasti Plaza Specific Plan considered the introduction of office, commercial and hotel uses on the site, with the integration of historic buildings and the protection of the agricultural and historic character of the project area. The analysis considered landmark buildings, historic features, historic character elements, and valuable buildings within the Specific Plan area. The EIR found that while impacts would likely occur, there was a substantial opportunity for the preservation and enhancement of the important features, characteristics, and values of the historic Guasti community. A number of mitigation measures were identified that would allow for the successful protection of the aesthetic resources created by the agricultural and historic characteristics of the Specific Plan area. Mitigation to manage the light and glare impacts of future development from affecting nearby airport operations was also provided. No significant impacts were expected after mitigation.

Consistent with the EIR for the Specific Plan, the proposed Amendment and future residential development on the site would lead to urban development on the site and new sources of light and glare.

A number of mitigation measures were provided in the EIR for Guasti Plaza Specific Plan:

1. Within the Historic Core, a representative sample of a working vineyard shall be preserved to enhance the historic character of the Project area.

The site is located outside the Historic Core; thus, this mitigation is not applicable to future residential development.

2. Primary Project gateway treatment shall show Eucalyptus planted in a windrow pattern and fieldstone incorporated into gateway monumentation signage.

The gateway treatment at the intersection of Turner Avenue and New Guasti Road has been constructed. This mitigation is no longer applicable.

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3. Freeway edge treatment shall specify a “large” landscape window to provide maximum visibility from the freeway to the mansion grounds.

The project site is located away from the freeway; thus, this mitigation is not applicable to future residential development.

4. A separate irrigation system for trees shall be required to allow deep watering and encourage downward growth of roots.

This mitigation remains applicable to future residential development under the proposed Specific Plan Amendment.

5. The streetscape concept for Archibald Avenue shall require a minimum landscape setback of 35’ from back of curb, to achieve a 1:1 ratio of landscape to roadway.

This mitigation remains applicable to future residential development under the proposed Specific Plan Amendment.

6. Exhibits shall be included that demonstrate pedestrian elements (such as trellis, plazas, benches, planters, crosswalks, etc.) consistent with Guasti’s historic character

This mitigation remains applicable to future residential development under the proposed Specific Plan Amendment.

7. Due to “summer branch drop” problems, Eucalyptus shall be removed from the plant list as a parking area shade tree.

This mitigation remains applicable to future residential development under the proposed Specific Plan Amendment.

8. Within the parking areas, turf shall be limited to less than 50% of the landscape area and shall be a drought tolerant material. Balance of the landscape within parking areas shall be comprised of trees and shrubs from the plant list.

This mitigation remains applicable to future residential development under the proposed Specific Plan Amendment.

9. Table 5 of the Specific Plan shall be revised to indicate size and spacing of plant material at the time of PAP submittal.

This mitigation remains applicable to future residential development under the proposed Specific Plan Amendment.

10. During the required site plan review of all proposed developments, the City Shall ensure that site improvements, including lighting and possible glare producing building exteriors, do not adversely affect adjacent land uses, with special attention given to those developments in the vicinity of Ontario International Airport.

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This mitigation remains applicable to future residential development under the proposed Amendment.

Guasti Redevelopment Plan EIR

The EIR for the Guasti Redevelopment Plan indicated that the Project Area is not located within a scenic corridor and impacts would be less than significant, with implementation of the mitigation measures in the EIR for the Guasti Plaza Specific Plan.

Consistent with the EIR for the Redevelopment Plan, future residential development on the site would not lead to significant adverse impacts related to aesthetics and visual quality.

4.14.5 Standard Conditions and Mitigation Measures

Standard Conditions

Future residential development would change the visual appearance of the project site. New sources of light and glare would be created. The implementation of the following standard conditions would prevent the creation of negative aesthetic impacts and spillover light and glare impacts:

Standard Condition 4.14.1: Future development on the project site shall be subject to site plan and design review for compliance with the development regulations and design guidelines in the amended Specific Plan and applicable regulations in the City's Development Code.

Standard Condition 4.14.2: Future development on the project site shall comply with Article 33, Environmental Performance Standards, of the City's Development Code that requires on-site lighting to be shielded or directed away from affecting airport operations.

Mitigation Measures

Consistent with the mitigation measures in the EIR for the Guasti Plaza Specific Plan and the EIR for the Guasti Redevelopment Plan, the following mitigation measures remain applicable to future residential development:

Mitigation Measure 4.14.1: A separate irrigation system for trees shall be required to allow deep watering and encourage downward growth of roots.

Mitigation Measure 4.14.2: The streetscape concept for Archibald Avenue shall require a minimum landscape setback of 35' from back of curb, to achieve a 1:1 ratio of landscape to roadway.

Mitigation Measure 4.14.3: Exhibits shall be included that demonstrate pedestrian elements (such as trellis, plazas, benches, planters, crosswalks, etc.) consistent with Guasti's historic character

Mitigation Measure 4.14.4: Due to "summer branch drop" problems, Eucalyptus shall be removed from the plant list as a parking area shade tree.

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Mitigation Measure 4.14.5: Within the parking areas, turf shall be limited to less than 50% of the landscape area and shall be a drought tolerant material. Balance of the landscape within parking areas shall be comprised of trees and shrubs from the plant list.

Mitigation Measure 4.14.6: Table 5 of the Specific Plan shall be revised to indicate size and spacing of plant material at the time of PAP submittal.

Mitigation Measure 4.14.7: During the required site plan review of all proposed developments, the City shall ensure that site improvements, including lighting and possible glare producing building exteriors, do not adversely affect adjacent land uses, with special attention given to those developments in the vicinity of Ontario International Airport.

4.14.6 Unavoidable Significant Adverse Impacts

Changes in the visual quality of the site would occur with future residential development under the proposed Specific Plan Amendment, along with the introduction of new sources of light and glare. Changes in the visual quality of the project site are not expected to result in the substantial degradation of views to and from the site, with compliance with the development standards and design guidelines in the proposed Specific Plan Amendment. Negative aesthetic impacts and impacts relating the light and glare can be prevented or reduced to less than significant levels by compliance with lighting standards in the proposed Specific Plan Amendment and applicable City regulations. Implementation of the mitigation measures above would further reduce impacts on aesthetics and visual quality. No unavoidable significant adverse impacts are expected after mitigation.