

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### 5.1 AESTHETICS

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) describes the existing landform and aesthetic character of the project site and surrounding area and describes views of the project site from surrounding vantage points. It also analyzes the potential aesthetic and visual impacts resulting from implementation of the Laguna Niguel City Center Mixed Use Project (proposed project). The information in this section is based on field reconnaissance, review of aerial photographs, and conceptual renderings prepared for the proposed project.

#### 5.1.1 Environmental Setting

##### 5.1.1.1 REGULATORY BACKGROUND

Local laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines that are potentially applicable to the proposed project are summarized below.

##### State

###### *California Building Code: Building Energy Efficiency Standards*

Energy conservation standards for new residential and nonresidential buildings were adopted by the California Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission (now the California Energy Commission) in June 1977 and most recently revised in 2018 (Title 24, Part 6, of the California Code of Regulations). The newly revised standards took effect on January 1, 2020. Title 24 requires the design of building shells and building components to conserve energy. It also requires outdoor lighting controls to reduce energy usage; in effect, this reduces outdoor lighting.

##### Local

###### *Laguna Niguel General Plan Land Use Element*

The following goals and policies of the Laguna Niguel General Plan Land Use Element related to aesthetics and visual character are applicable to the proposed project.

**Goal 4:** Urban design that provides community gathering areas and other pedestrian spaces.

- **Policy 4.1.** Emphasize attractive and functional urban design in new development.
- **Policy 4.3.** Require, where feasible, the development of open spaces and places for people to gather within commercial and office complexes.
- **Policy 4.4** Provide, where feasible, pedestrian walkways and linkages between residential, commercial, office, open space/recreation facilities and other public places.

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

#### *Laguna Niguel Zoning Code*

The following provisions from the Laguna Niguel Zoning Code help minimize aesthetic and light and glare impacts associated with new development projects and are relevant to the proposed project.

- **Sections 9-1-35.15 and 9-1-45.14 (Outdoor Lighting).** These sections provide residential and nonresidential standards for outdoor lighting to allow adequate lighting for public safety while minimizing the adverse effects of excessive lighting on neighbors and the community. The allowed location, height, intensity, and design of outdoor lighting are further detailed in this section of the code.
- **Section 9-1-42 (Permitted Uses).** This section details the uses permitted within the Mixed Use – Town Center (MU-TC) District.
- **Section 9-1-43 (Nonresidential Development and Mixed Use Standards).** This section details development standards of properties within the MU-TC District, such as minimum setbacks, maximum structure heights and minimum lot sizes. For the proposed project, the MU-TC District has a maximum building height of 50 feet, minimum perimeter setback of 20 feet from street right-of-way and a setback to residential districts, and PI, PR, and OS districts of a minimum of 15 feet at any point and a minimum average of 20 feet.
- **Section 9-1-45.3 (Landscaping).** A landscape plan shall be prepared and implemented for all development projects. Landscaping shall consist of trees, shrubs, vines, groundcover or a combination thereof. This section includes landscape design guidelines, boundary landscaping requirements, and interior landscaping requirements.
- **Subarticle 7 (Signs).** This subarticle details the standard regulating signage within the City of Laguna Niguel (City). Provisions are related to sign placement, design, illumination, and size.
- **Subarticle 9 (Community Design Guidelines).** The community design guidelines provide architectural, landscape, and site planning criteria for the design and review of proposed commercial, office, industrial, attached residential, and other development within the City. Projects are subject to design review by the City's Community Development Director and Planning Commission.

The proposed project requires a Site Development Permit which would include a detailed review for compliance with the aforementioned development and design standards.

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

#### 5.1.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

##### Visual Character and Land Use

The project site is in a suburban setting, approximately in the center of Laguna Niguel. The 25-acre site encompasses the closed South County Justice Center building, a county maintenance yard, the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) Fire Station No. 5, the Orange County Library (Laguna Niguel Branch), and their associated surface parking lots (see Figure 5.1-1, *Site Photos*). The closed courthouse is approximately 33,300 square feet and 30 feet tall. The OCFA fire station is about 8,000 square feet and 25 feet tall at its highest point. The county maintenance yard consists of two buildings, approximately 6,288 square feet combined and about 15 to 18 feet tall. The Orange County Library is about 13,950 square feet and approximately 15 to 20 feet in height. The structures are along the perimeter of the project site near adjacent roadways (i.e., Pacific Island Drive, Alicia Parkway, and Crown Valley Parkway), and the large middle and western portions of the site are vacant and undeveloped (see Figure 3-3, *Aerial Photograph*).

The site is at the bottom of a steep hillside that borders the project's western boundary. As shown in Figure 4-1, *Site Topography*, the terrain is varied throughout the project site. There is a net elevation change of 50 feet from the low point of approximately 320 feet above mean sea level (amsl) in the southern corner (site entrance at Crown Valley Parkway) to 370 feet amsl at the top of a small knoll in the northern corner of the site (near Pacific Island Drive/Alicia Parkway intersection). However, there are no significant visual resources or landforms located on the project site. Existing site landscaping includes ornamental trees along the perimeter of the project site and scattered throughout the surface parking area, but these are not considered scenic resources. The trees are typical of landscaped ornamental trees in urban areas of southern California. Sources of light on-site include building (exterior and interior), security, and parking area lighting for the county maintenance yard and library (the South County Justice Center closed in 2008).

The site shares a boundary with City Hall at the corner of Alicia Parkway and Crown Valley Parkway. This parcel is 'not a part' of the project as shown in Figure 3-4, *Proposed Site Plan*. The City Hall has Mission-style architecture with contemporary elements. The building generally ranges from 35 feet to 48 feet in height and includes a 65-foot clock tower.

As shown on Figure 3-3, *Aerial Photograph*, surrounding residential development includes a mix of townhomes and apartments. The Niguel Summit Condominiums are at the top of the steep slope along the project site's western boundary; Pointe Niguel Apartment Homes are located across Pacific Island Drive; and El Niguel Townhomes and Charter Terrace townhome communities are to the west and southwest of the site. The Niguel Summit Apartments pad elevations are approximately 420 feet amsl and the El Niguel residences at approximately 400 feet amsl. These residences are multi-story and the pad elevations sit above the highest point of the existing City Hall building. City Hall has a building pad at approximately 325 feet and is 35 feet to 65 feet high for a total height of 360 feet to 390 feet (relative to the 400 feet+ elevations of the surrounding residential uses).

Directly across from Pacific Island Drive, Alicia Parkway, and Crown Valley Parkway are the Pacific Island Shopping Center, Town Center, and Crown Valley Mall, respectively. These shopping centers are anchored by supermarkets and drugstores, including Albertsons, Smart and Final, Rite-Aid, Walgreens, and CVS Pharmacy,

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

and contain other smaller neighborhood-serving businesses, such as banks, coffee shops, fast-food restaurants, and gas stations.

#### 5.1.2 Thresholds of Significance

The City's CEQA Manual provides local guidelines, procedures, requirements, and thresholds of significance for the environmental review process within the City consistent with the CEQA Statutes (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and State CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR, Division 6, Chapter 3, Section 15000 et seq.) (Laguna Niguel 2021).

The Laguna Niguel General Plan has mapped Landscape Corridors within the City on Figure OS-3, included in the City's CEQA Manual as Figure 2. Landscape Corridors have been "designated for special treatment to provide a pleasant driving environment as well as community enhancement." Projects that fall within a Landscape Corridor shall be analyzed for impacts to a landscape corridor. No state scenic highways are located within the City.

A project may require a shade and shadow analysis if the project has the potential to cast new shadows on existing neighboring properties. This condition could occur as a result of topographic changes to a site or the location and height of new structures. Appendix G does not directly establish a threshold of significance for potential shading/shadowing impacts; therefore, the following threshold is hereby established:

According to the City's CEQA Manual, a project would have a significant impact on the environment if it would:

*Cast shade on shadow-sensitive uses by project-related structures for more than three hours between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time (between late October and early April), or for more than four hours between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time (between early April and late October). Shadow-sensitive uses shall include residential structures and associated outdoor living space, schools, public parks, and other unique situations determined by the Community Development Director.*

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and the City's CEQA Manual, "except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099," a project would normally have a significant effect on the environment if the project would:

- AE-1 Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- AE-2 Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.
- AE-3 In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality.



Figure 5.1-1 - Site Photographs  
5. Environmental Analysis



Photo 1. View of grasslands and slightly undulating terrain onsite looking west towards the El Niguel Condominiums, separated by off-site manufactured slopes in background.



Photo 2. Overview of land covers including non-native grassland, landscaped and ornamental trees, and developed/disturbed areas. The existing courthouse is hidden behind the ornamental trees.



Photo 3. View of the closed South County Justice Center.



Photo 4. View of disturbed dirt road, non-native grassland, and ornamental trees from the County maintenance yard. The City Hall building and clock tower can be seen in the background.



Photo 5. View of ornamental landscaping, grassland and the County Library building in the background.



Photo 6. View of the County maintenance yard in the northern portion of the project site. The OCFA fire station can be seen in the background.



## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

*This page intentionally left blank.*

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

- AE-4 Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

### 5.1.3 Plans, Programs, and Policies

- PPP AES-1 The proposed project will be designed and constructed in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Laguna Niguel Municipal Code—Sections 9-1-35.15 and 9-1-45.14 (Outdoor Lighting), Section 9-1-42 (Permitted Uses), Section 9-1-43 (Nonresidential Development Standards), Section 9-1-45.3 (Landscaping), Subarticle 7 (Signs), and Subarticle 9 (Community Design Guidelines).
- PPP AES-2 The proposed project will be required to comply with California’s Building Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings (Title 24, Part 6, of the California Code of Regulations), which outlines mandatory provisions for lighting control devices and luminaires.

### 5.1.4 Environmental Impacts

#### 5.1.4.1 METHODOLOGY

##### *Aesthetic/Visual Character Analysis*

The assessment of aesthetic impacts is subjective by nature. Aesthetics generally refers to the identification of visual resources and the quality of what can be seen, as well as an overall visual perception of the environment. This analysis attempts to identify and objectively examine factors that contribute to the perception of aesthetic impacts. Potential aesthetic impacts can be evaluated by considering proposed building setbacks, scale, massing, typical construction materials, and landscaping features of the proposed project. The Laguna Niguel Zoning Code includes a variety of provisions related to development standards for residential and nonresidential development (e.g., building height limits, setbacks, landscaping) and community design guidelines (see Section 5.1.1.1, *Regulatory Background*). As described above in 5.1.3, *Thresholds of Significance*, the City’s CEQA Manual provides local guidelines, procedures, requirements, and thresholds of significance for the environmental review process within the City. The City’s CEQA Manual provides guidelines for potential aesthetic impacts along Landscape Corridors and provides thresholds for shade and shadow analysis. Conceptual renderings and perspectives of the proposed project are included to help examine the aesthetic compatibility of the conceptual plans with the surrounding area and potential impacts to visual resources and viewers in the project area. Surrounding land uses consist of residential uses (i.e., Niguel Summit Apartments, Charter Terrace Townhomes, and El Niguel community) to the north and west; commercial uses (i.e., Pacific Island shopping center, Town Center, and Crown Valley Mall) to the north, east, and south; and civic uses (i.e., City Hall) to the south (see Figure 3-3, *Aerial Photograph*). Intermittent views by passing motorists along Crown Valley Parkway, Alicia Parkway, and Pacific Island Drive are also considered.

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

#### *Light and Glare Analysis*

Nighttime illumination and glare analysis addresses the effects of a project's exterior lighting on adjoining uses and areas. Light and glare impacts are determined by comparing the existing light sources with the proposed lighting plan or policies. If the project has the potential to generate spill light on adjacent sensitive receptors or generate glare for receptors in the vicinity of the site, mitigation measures can be provided to reduce potential impacts, as necessary.

#### 5.1.4.2 IMPACT ANALYSIS

The following impact analysis addresses thresholds of significance for which the Notice of Preparation disclosed potentially significant impacts (see Appendix A). The applicable thresholds are identified in brackets after the impact statement.

---

**Impact 5.1-1: The proposed project would not have an adverse effect on a scenic vista. [Thresholds AE-1]**

---

Scenic vistas are panoramic views of features such as mountains, forests, the ocean, or urban skylines. The project site is in an urban area of Laguna Niguel and surrounded mostly by commercial and residential development. The proposed project would include one-, two-, three and four-story buildings. No views of the Pacific Ocean exist from the project site because of obstructions by trees, buildings, rooflines, and existing topography. No mountains, forests, or urban skylines can be seen from the project area either. There are public vantage points west of the project site along Pacific Island Drive with long-distance views, including mountains to the east. However, the proposed development would not obstruct these views.

As described in the Laguna Niguel CEQA Manual, views from private properties are not protected under CEQA or by local ordinance and therefore, not part of this aesthetics analysis. The project site does not constitute a scenic vista and the proposed project would not block public views of a scenic vista. It should be noted that along the western edge of the project site, the pad elevations of the existing adjoining residents would remain above the highest points of the proposed project. The pad elevations of the townhouses to the west of the project site on top of the adjoining slope are approximately 420 feet above mean sea level. All structures, including light standards and parapets would not exceed 50 feet in height<sup>1</sup>. The residential structure (Building 15) in the northwest corner of the site near Pacific Island Drive has building elements at the highest elevation above mean sea level at approximately 411 msl, which remains below the pad elevations of the adjoining residential uses at 420 msl. Similarly in the southern portion of the site the residences off Via Corona have pad elevations approximately 380 feet above msl and the tallest point of Buildings 1 and 2 measure approximately 368 feet above msl. Therefore, while private views are not protected, development of the project would not extend above the pad elevations of the adjoining residences.

***Level of Significance Before Mitigation:*** No Impact.

---

<sup>1</sup> The parking garage pad would be 350 feet above mean sea level

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

---

**Impact 5.1-2: The proposed project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway. [Thresholds AE-2]**

---

The project site is partially improved with the existing South County Justice Center, library, and county maintenance yard. The remaining area is undeveloped and vacant. There are no rock outcroppings or historic buildings on-site. Ornamental trees occur along the perimeter of the project site and scattered throughout the surface parking area, but these trees are not considered scenic resources. The trees are typical of landscaped ornamental trees in urban areas of southern California. Therefore, no important scenic resources occur on-site.

No built historical resources are recorded at the project site based on a literature and records review conducted for the project. The cultural resources literature and records review is discussed in Section 5.4, *Cultural Resources*. Further, the Open Space, Parks, and Conservation Element of the Laguna Niguel General Plan states that the City does not have any historical resources within its boundaries.

The project site is not within a state scenic highway, nor is the project site visible from any officially designated scenic highways. State Routes 1 and 73 are eligible state scenic highways; however, the project site is not visible from these roadways (Caltrans 2011). Thus, the project would not damage scenic resources within a state scenic highway. Crown Valley Parkway is designated a Landscape Corridor in the City's General Plan Figure OS-3. The project would provide a landscaped buffer/setback between the new buildings/development and Crown Valley Parkway, a designated Landscape Corridor. The landscaped buffer would be designed according to the required landscaping standards and would retain a landscape character similar to that of the Crown Valley Parkway Landscape Corridor. The proposed landscape design would result in no impacts to the Landscape Corridor designation.

***Level of Significance Before Mitigation:*** No Impact.

---

**Impact 5.1-3: The project would not conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality. [Threshold AE-3]**

---

The project site is at the bottom of a steep hillside that borders the project's western boundary. The ground surface elevation across the site varies from an elevation of about 305 to 370 feet. The current visual setting of the site is partially developed with the abandoned courthouse, county maintenance yard, County library, and associated parking areas. The remainder of the site is predominantly vacant and undeveloped, with nonnative grasslands and ornamental trees (see Figure 5.1-1, *Site Photos*). The proposed project would develop up to 174,581 square feet of nonresidential uses and up to 275 multifamily dwelling units. Prior to development of the proposed structures, construction activities would involve demolishing the South County Justice Center (abandoned courthouse), county maintenance yard, County library, and surface parking areas. Therefore, the project would alter the existing visual character of the project site. There are no significant visual resources on or near the project site.

The proposed project includes grading and modifications to the existing landform. The area east of OCFA Fire Station No. 5 and generally bound by Alicia Parkway and Pacific Island Drive is the area with the deepest

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

cuts, which would lower finished elevations up to approximately 23 feet. The center of the site also has areas of cut, which would lower elevations approximately 10 to 12 feet. Areas of fill are scattered throughout the site and range up to 9 feet. The proposed grading would not substantially increase the elevation of the site in a manner that would change the visual character of the site.

As shown in Figure 3-4, *Proposed Site Plan*, various elements of the project—Retail Village Core, Creative Office Space, etc.—would form a collection of community uses, essentially creating a downtown environment for residents and visitors of Laguna Niguel. The mixed-use project is envisioned to feature retail shops, restaurants, office, integrated residential, community-oriented event space and extensive walkable open space plazas, gardens and squares.

Proposed buildings would range from one to four stories and would not exceed 50 feet in height, which is consistent with the height limit in the proposed Mixed Use Zone. This height limit is compatible with surrounding land uses and topography. The height of the proposed structures will not project above the pad elevations of the adjoining residential uses. Furthermore, the proposed building heights are consistent with the height of City Hall, which ranges from 35 feet to 65 feet, making the proposed project compatible with its surroundings.

The Town Green would be seen upon site entry. This area would include a single-story retail building built around the central Town Green open space plaza area and linked by landscaped paseos featuring shade trees. The buildings are proposed to have patios that open onto the Town Green. The Town Green would include seating areas, outdoor performance/event spaces, and other programmable spaces. The buildings would be architecturally distinctive and designed with a natural material such as wood, stone, and plaster siding; crafted storefronts featuring wood and steel windows with fabric awnings and distinctive handcrafted signage; and gabled roofs with standing-seam metal and cedar-shake roofs.

Residential 1 would consist of a three- and four-story residential building (Lot 17) at the southwest corner of Alicia Parkway and Pacific Island Drive between the Laguna Niguel City Hall and the OCFA fire station No. 5. Similar to other buildings on-site, building design and materials would consist mainly of white smooth plaster, natural wood, stone, and steel. Building height, including architectural features and appurtenances, would not exceed 50 feet in height. Resident amenities would include a leasing office, clubhouse, state-of-the-art fitness center, outdoor dining, resort pool and spa, cabanas, and pet spa.

Residential 2 would consist of two- and three-story buildings surrounding surface parking, some with private rooftop decks (see also Figure 3-4). Building amenities include a private lounge adjacent to and integrated with a resort-style pool and spa. Residents in this building would also have access to amenities in Residential 1. Some of the ground-floor units facing the south and east side of the building would have direct entry at the street level through private, gated patios. The buildings would have traditional residential design that complements the commercial buildings and would include a mixture of materials, including plaster, metal, stone, and tile.

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

#### Project Visual Simulations

Visual simulations, included as Figures 5.1-2 through 5.1-10, were prepared from eight viewing points along the project site's perimeter to illustrate how what the project is anticipated to look like at completion compared to existing conditions. Figure 5.1-2 shows the proposed project site plan with view locations and view directions. Figure 5.1-3, *Perimeter View 1 – Existing and Proposed Views from Crown Valley Parkway Looking Northeast Towards the Project Site Driveway*, reflects views of the project site that would be seen by motorists and pedestrians along Crown Valley Parkway. The pre-development view shows the existing vegetation including bushes, shrubs, and trees and the existing topography. The proposed view shows the entry driveway off Crown Valley Parkway and the Retail Village Core buildings. The topography remains similar to existing conditions.

Figure 5.1-4, *Perimeter View 2 – Existing and Proposed Views from Crown Valley Parkway Looking East Towards the Project Site*, shows views of the project site that would be experienced by motorists and/or pedestrians along Crown Valley Parkway. The existing view is characterized by roadways, traffic lights, landscaping including grass, shrubs and trees. The existing Orange County Library is barely visible behind the ornamental landscaping. The post-development view from Perimeter View 2 shows new landscaping with a larger lawn along Crown Valley Parkway. A parking lot and proposed new retail building are setback from Crown Valley Parkway and visible from this location. The topography at this location remains similar to the existing conditions.

Figure 5.1-5, *Perimeter View 3 – Existing and Proposed Views from Crown Valley Parkway and Alicia Parkway Looking East Towards the Project Site*, reflects views of the project site that would be seen by motorists and pedestrians along Crown Valley Parkway and Alicia Parkway. The pre-development view is characterized by the roadways in the foreground and the existing City Hall building and landscaping in the background. The post-development view would be slightly altered. The proposed Residential 1 building would be visible to the north from this viewpoint.

Figure 5.1-6, *Perimeter View 4 – Existing and Proposed Views from Alicia Parkway and Pacific Island Drive Looking Southwest Towards the Project Site*, reflects views of the project site that would be seen by motorists and pedestrians along Alicia Parkway and Pacific Island Drive. The pre-development view is characterized by the roadways in the foreground and the project site with vegetation and trees along the frontage. The existing buildings are partially visible through the trees. The post-development view would consist of the proposed Residential 1 building. The proposed Residential 1 Building's massing and height that is would be greater than existing conditions.

Figure 5.1-7, *Perimeter View 5 – Existing and Proposed Views from Alicia Parkway and Pacific Island Drive Looking West Towards the Project Site*, reflects views of the project site that would be seen by motorists and/or pedestrians. The pre-development view is characterized by the roadways and streetlights in the foreground, a slope at the northern boundary of the project site, the Pacific Island commercial center, the OCFA Fire Station, and tall trees in the middleground. The background consists of a natural hillside with residences along the ridgeline. The proposed Residential 1 Building would be the dominant feature in the post-development view from this location. Due to the building's massing and height, the hillside in the background would be partially obstructed.

Figure 5.1-8, *Perimeter View 6 – Existing and Proposed Views from Pacific Island Drive Looking South*, reflects view of the project site that would be seen by motorists and commercial center patrons along Pacific Island Drive. The

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

pre-development view is characterized by roadways and sidewalks in the foreground, a slope along the northern portion of the project site, the OCFA fire station, trees and hills in the background. The post-development foreground views would remain the same; however, the middleground and background views would be altered and dominated by the proposed Residential 1 Building and the roofline of the new public library.

Figure 5.1-9, *Perimeter View 7 – Existing and Proposed Views from Pacific Island Drive Looking Southwest*, reflects views of the project site that would be seen by motorists and pedestrians along Pacific Island Drive. The pre-development view is characterized by roadways, sidewalks, and streetlights in the foreground, the OCFA Fire Station, County Maintenance yard, and tall trees in the middleground, and vegetated hillsides partially developed with residences in the background. The post-development foreground views would remain the same. The OCFA Fire Station would remain visible and the Residential 2 Building would be the dominant feature partially obstructing views of the hillsides. The ridgelines would still be visible.

Figure 5.1-10, *Perimeter View 8 – Existing and Proposed Views from Pacific Island Drive and Highland Drive Looking Southeast*, reflects view of the project site that would be seen by residents, pedestrians, and motorists. The Pre-development view is characterized by roadways, streetlights, and tall trees. The County Maintenance Yard and OCFA Fire Station are visible in the middleground. Partially developed hillsides are slightly visible in the background between the tall trees. The post-development view of the project site would no longer include the tall trees or County Maintenance Yard and the dominant feature would be the Residential 2 Building at the northeast corner of the project site.

### Overall Consistency with Applicable Policies Governing Aesthetics

As detailed in Section 5.1.1.1, *Regulatory Background*, Goal 4 and accompanying policies in the General Plan Land Use Element relate to visual character and aesthetics that apply to the proposed project.

Goal 4 calls for “urban design that provides for community gathering areas and other pedestrian spaces.” Consistent with Goal 4 and its policies, the proposed project would help transform the project area into a vibrant community center and place of gathering. The proposed project design would be attractive and functional to encourage people to use the common open space amenities, pedestrian-oriented courtyards, and promenade and visit the shops, kiosks, and restaurants. The architectural design, scale, and massing of the proposed project is compatible with the adjacent City Hall and the surrounding area. Heavily landscaped perimeters along arterial roadways further elevate the project’s visual quality and character. Overall, the site planning, design, and orientation of the proposed development on-site would help to establish a dynamic town center for Laguna Niguel.



Figure 5.1-2 - Perimeter Viewpoint Location  
5. Environmental Analysis



Source: OJB

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

*This page intentionally left blank.*

Figure 5.1-3 - Perimeter View 1 – Existing and Proposed Views from Crown Valley Parkway Looking Northeast Towards the Project Site Driveway

## 5. Environmental Analysis



Perimeter View 1 - Existing



Perimeter View 1 - Proposed

Source: OBJ, 2022

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

*This page intentionally left blank.*



Figure 5.1-4 - Perimeter View 2 – Existing and Proposed Views from Crown Valley Parkway Looking East Towards the Project Site

## 5. Environmental Analysis



Perimeter View 2 - Existing



Perimeter View 2 - Proposed

Source: OBJ, 2022

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

*This page intentionally left blank.*

Figure 5.1-5 - Perimeter View 3 – Existing and Proposed Views from Crown Valley Parkway and Alicia Parkway Looking East Towards the Project Site

## 5. Environmental Analysis



Perimeter View 3 - Existing



Perimeter View 3 - Proposed

Source: OBJ, 2022

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

*This page intentionally left blank.*



Figure 5.1-6 - Perimeter View 4 – Existing and Proposed Views from Alicia Parkway and Pacific Island Drive Looking Southwest Towards the Project Site

## 5. Environmental Analysis



Perimeter View 4 - Existing



Perimeter View 4 - Proposed

Source: OBJ, 2022

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

*This page intentionally left blank.*

Figure 5.1-7 - Perimeter View 5 – Existing and Proposed Views from Alicia Parkway and Pacific Island Drive Looking West Towards the Project Site

## 5. Environmental Analysis



Perimeter View 5 - Existing



Perimeter View 5 - Proposed

Source: OBJ, 2022

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

*This page intentionally left blank.*



Figure 5.1-8 - Perimeter View 6 – Existing and Proposed Views from Pacific Island Drive Looking South Towards the Project Site Driveway

## 5. Environmental Analysis



Perimeter View 6 - Existing



Perimeter View 6 - Proposed

Source: OBJ, 2022

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

*This page intentionally left blank.*

Figure 5.1-9 - Perimeter View 7 – Existing and Proposed Views from Pacific Island Drive Looking Southwest Towards the Project Site

## 5. Environmental Analysis



Perimeter View 7 - Existing



Perimeter View 7 - Proposed

Source: OBJ, 2022

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

*This page intentionally left blank.*



Figure 5.1-10 - Perimeter View 8 – Existing and Proposed Views from Pacific Island Drive and Highlands Drive Looking Southeast Towards the Project Site

## 5. Environmental Analysis



Perimeter View 8 - Existing



Perimeter View 8 - Proposed

Source: OBJ, 2022

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

*This page intentionally left blank.*

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

As described in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, the proposed project includes a zone change from “Community Commercial” to “Mixed-Use Town Center” (MU-TC) district. A zoning code amendment is proposed to establish the mix of permissible land uses and development standards for the new MU-TC district. For the proposed project, the MU-TC District has a maximum building height of 50 feet, minimum perimeter setback of 20 feet from street right-of-way and a setback to residential districts, and PI, PR, and OS districts of a minimum of 15 feet at any point and a minimum average of 20 feet. A site development permit (SDP 19-03) is also proposed because the project includes over 5,000 cubic yards of earth work and to allow alternative development standards for a reduction in the minimum depth of boundary landscaping at the base of an ascending slope for a property line segment along proposed Lot 15. The City’s Community Development Department and Planning Commission would review the project’s design features to ensure they complement and adhere to the City’s community design guidelines in Subarticle 9 (Community Design Guidelines) of the Laguna Niguel Zoning Code.

Proposed buildings would range from one to four stories and would not exceed 50 feet in height, which is consistent with the height limit in the proposed Mixed-Use Zone. This height limit is compatible with surrounding land uses and topography. The height of the proposed structures will not project above the pad elevations of the adjoining residential uses. Furthermore, the proposed building heights are consistent with the height of City Hall, which generally ranges from 35 feet up to 65 feet, making the proposed project compatible with its surroundings.

Overall, the site’s existing character consisting of disjointed and vacant civic structures along the project perimeter, underutilized parking lots, and undeveloped land would be enhanced through development of the proposed project, and the visual character and quality of the site and its surroundings would not be adversely impacted and the project would not conflict with applicable zoning standards and other regulations governing scenic quality.

***Level of Significance Before Mitigation:*** With the implementation of PPP AES-1, Impact 5.1-4 would be less than significant.

---

**Impact 5.1-4: The project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. [Threshold AE-4]**

---

Sources of existing light and glare on-site include building (exterior and interior), security, and parking area lighting for the county maintenance yard and library. The South County Justice Center closed in 2008 and there are no operational exterior or interior lights associated with the building. Off-site sources of existing light and glare in the project area include building, security, and parking area lighting for the OCFA fire station and City Hall to the north and south, respectively, and lighting for the shopping centers across Pacific Island Drive, Alicia Parkway, and Crown Valley Parkway. Streetlights and vehicular traffic along Crown Valley Parkway, Alicia Parkway, and Pacific Island Drive are also sources of existing light and glare in the project area. These existing light and glare sources are typical of a suburban neighborhood and do not create significant nighttime lighting issues.

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

#### Light

Since the project site is predominantly vacant and undeveloped, the proposed project would alter and intensify lighting on the project site by introducing new lighting sources associated with building lighting (interior and exterior), security lighting, and parking area lights (see Figure 5.1-11, *Site Lighting Plan*). In addition to necessary lighting for safety and security, the proposed project would introduce aesthetic lighting, such as illumination in landscaped areas, architectural and façade detailing, and signage/entryway lighting.

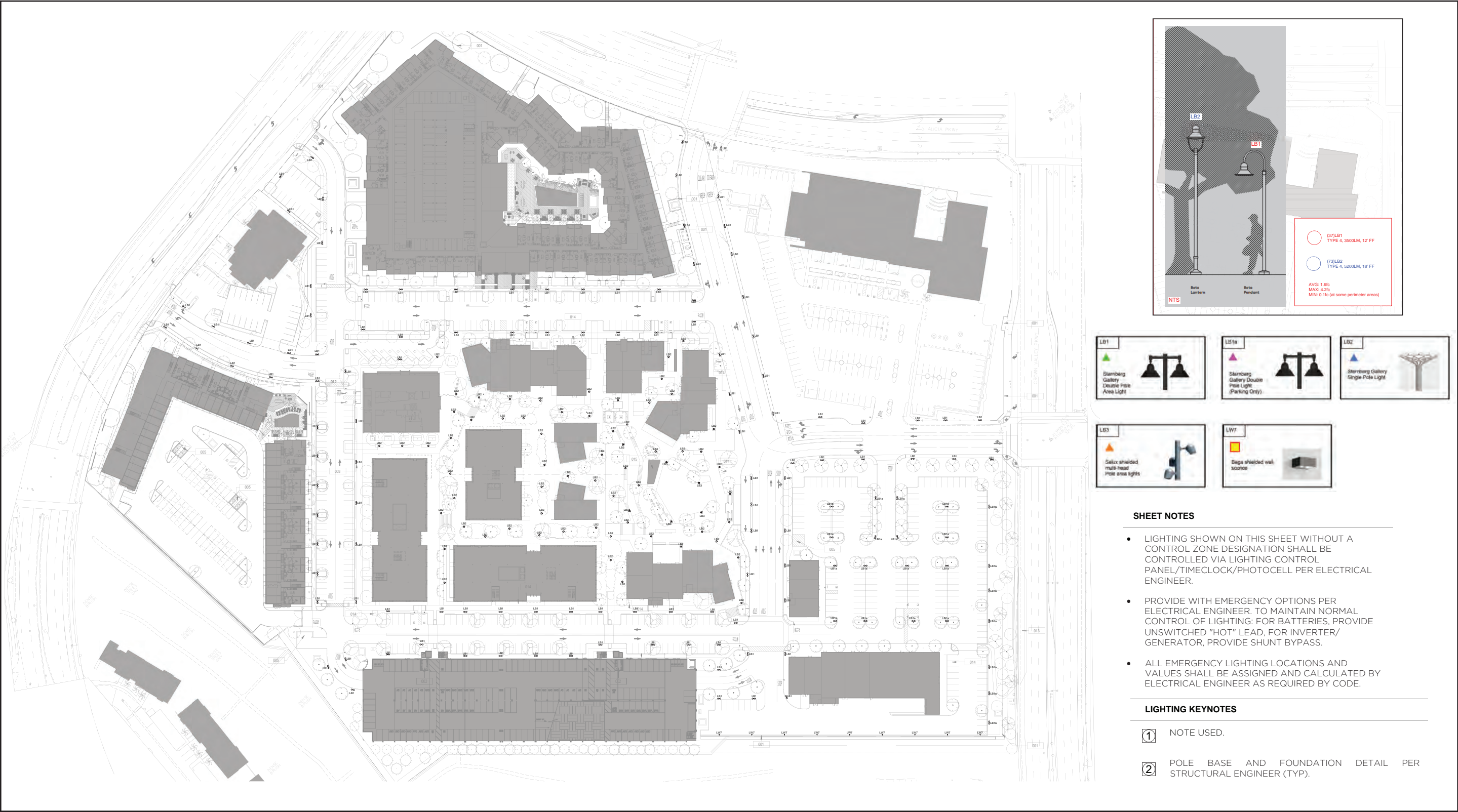
Additionally, the proposed project anticipates regularly hosting community events, including holiday festivals, movie screenings, and farmer markets, that may require unique lighting. For example, movie screenings at night would require a projector and large screen, and other community events at night may require stage and production lighting. However, per Section 9-1-45.13 of the Laguna Niguel Zoning Code, the applicant would be required to obtain Temporary Use Permits prior to special outdoor events, which would detail, in addition to other issues, lighting requirements to ensure the events do not negatively impact surrounding uses.

Despite new sources of lighting, development of the proposed project is not expected to generate a substantial increase in light that would result in a significant impact. A *Photometric Study* of the lighting plan is provided as Figure 5.1-6b. Residential and nonresidential development would be required to comply with outdoor lighting standards in Sections 9-1-35.15 and 9-1-45.14 of the Laguna Niguel Zoning Code, respectively. Section 9-1-35.15 requires residential parking lots to have a lighting intensity of at least 1.0 foot-candle at all points but not to exceed an average of 3.0 foot-candles over the entire parking lot. The parking lot structure would include lighting on the roof that would meet code standards with shielded lighting fixtures oriented down and away from adjacent residences. The lighting on the roof of the parking structure adjacent to residential uses would be obstructed by topography (i.e., the parking structure rooftop elevation and security lighting would be at a lower elevation than the adjacent residences and be directed downward). The parking structure rooftop would be flat and would not result in vehicle headlights being oriented upward. Lighting must only be installed adjacent to residential buildings, walkways, driveways, activity areas (decks, patios, spas and pools, and similar use areas), and focal landscape areas close to the residence or activity area. Building-mounted lights must be installed below the roofline, and pole- or fence-mounted lights must be no more than eight feet above grade, except in residential parking lots.

Section 9-1-45.14 requires lighting intensity in nonresidential parking lots and adjacent areas to be at least 1.0 foot-candle at all points but not exceed an average of 3.0 foot-candles over the entire parking lot. All lighting sources must be shielded so they are not visible from outside the project site, and they must not add more than 0.2 foot-candle to ambient conditions (as measured 20 feet beyond the project boundary). Similar to residential lighting, all lights must only be installed adjacent to buildings, walkways, driveways, activity areas, and focal landscape areas. Nonresidential, building-mounted lights must also all be installed below the roofline, and pole- or fence-mounted lights must be no more than 24 feet above finish grade.



Figure 5-1.11 - Site Lighting Plan  
5. Environmental Analysis



Source: Oculus Light Studio, 2019, 2021

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

*This page intentionally left blank.*

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

The proposed lighting would represent the minimum level of illumination necessary to meet the aesthetic and security needs at the project site for both day and nighttime activities. Light sources, intensity, and color would be designed and located to achieve security or decorative lighting goals without causing an adverse impact on neighboring properties through light spillover. Per Section 9-1-71.5 of the Laguna Niguel Zoning Code, potential illumination from project signage would be shaded, shielded, directed, or reduced to avoid undue brightness and spill light at residential properties in the surrounding areas. Compliance with the applicable lighting provisions of the Zoning Code would be enforced through the City's development review and building plan check process. Further, proposed landscaping and common open space areas between the residential and nonresidential buildings would soften the impact of new light and glare sources. Section 9-1-45.3, Landscaping, requires that a landscape plan be prepared and implemented, and landscaping must include trees, shrubs, vines, groundcover, or a combination thereof.

#### Glare

The proposed buildings would not be designed with large expanses of glass or highly finished materials (e.g., reflective metal treatments). Nevertheless, windows could potentially increase glare because they would reflect sunlight at certain times of day. The project would include a 1.5 kilowatt/unit solar panel system on carports in the surface parking lot (see Figure 5.1-12, *Carport Photovoltaic Layout*). Although the solar panels may produce glare, it is not expected to cause extreme visual discomfort or impairment of vision for residents because the panels are designed with minimal reflectivity to absorb as much sunlight as possible. The panels would be located downslope from the residences to the west and would be obstructed by topography and existing vegetation along the hillside that would remain in place. The solar panel tilt would not result in direct glare towards residences to the west. Similarly, the panels would not be expected to cause visual impairment for motorists on area roadways because the solar panels would be located at a lower elevation than the motorists along Pacific Island Drive, setback about 500 feet from the road, and obstructed by intervening topography, buildings, and existing trees. Vehicles parked on-site would increase the potential for reflected sunlight at certain times of day, but such glare is typical of the surrounding area (i.e., residential communities, City Hall, commercial shopping centers, and parking lots) and would not increase beyond what is expected for a neighborhood-serving commercial area. Therefore, project-related day and nighttime glare impacts are not anticipated to be significant.

Further, Subarticle 7, Signs, of the Laguna Niguel Zoning Code details standards regulating signage within the City that the project would be required to adhere to. Section 9-1-71.5, Sign Illumination, states that illumination from or upon any sign shall be shaded, shielded, directed, or reduced to avoid undue brightness and limit glare or reflection of light onto residential properties in the surrounding area. Building-mounted signs, free-standing signs, and neon signs are also required to adhere to illumination standards to minimize light and glare impacts to adjacent properties.

#### Shade and Shadows

The nearest shadow sensitive uses are the residences immediately to the west of the project site. As described above, the pad elevations of the existing adjoining residents would remain above the highest points of the proposed project. The pad elevations of the townhouses to the west of the project site on top of the adjoining

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

slope are approximately 420 feet amsl. All structures, including light standards and parapets would not exceed 50 feet in height. The residential structure (Building 15) in the northwest corner of the site near Pacific Island Drive has building elements at the highest elevation above mean sea level at approximately 411 feet amsl, which remains below the pad elevations of the adjoining residential uses at 420 feet amsl. Similarly in the southern portion of the site the residences off Via Corona have pad elevations approximately 380 feet amsl and the tallest point of Buildings 1 and 2 measure approximately 368 feet amsl. Therefore, development of the project would not cast shade on shadow sensitive uses.

Overall, the project would not create new sources of substantial light, glare, or shade that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area, and impacts would be less than significant.

***Level of Significance Before Mitigation:*** With the implementation of PPPs AES-1 and AES-2, Impact 5.1-5 would be less than significant.

#### 5.1.5 Cumulative Impacts

Aesthetic impacts are localized to the project site and immediate surrounding area. Therefore, cumulative aesthetic impacts would impact only projects near the project site. As shown in Figure 4-2, *Cumulative Projects Location Map*, most cumulative projects in Laguna Niguel are clustered near Interstate 5 (I-5), approximately three miles northeast of the project site. The remainder of the cumulative projects are mostly in the cities of San Juan Capistrano and Dana Point, approximately four miles southeast of the project site. The closest cumulative project is The Cove at El Niguel, approximately a quarter mile southwest of the project site, which consists of 23 condominiums and would not result in a cumulative impact because it is not visible from the project site or immediately surrounding areas due to distance.

As with the proposed project, The Cove at El Niguel project would alter the visual character in its vicinity near Crown Valley Parkway. However, since The Cove at El Niguel is visually consistent with its surroundings and not visible from the proposed project, the proposed project would not contribute to a cumulative visual impact within the surrounding area. Furthermore, both the proposed project and The Cove at El Niguel are required to comply with regulations related to aesthetics and lighting and glare in the Laguna Niguel Zoning Code and, when considered with past and existing development, would not create a significant cumulative impact.

#### 5.1.6 Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Impacts 5.1-1 and 5.1-2 have no impact.

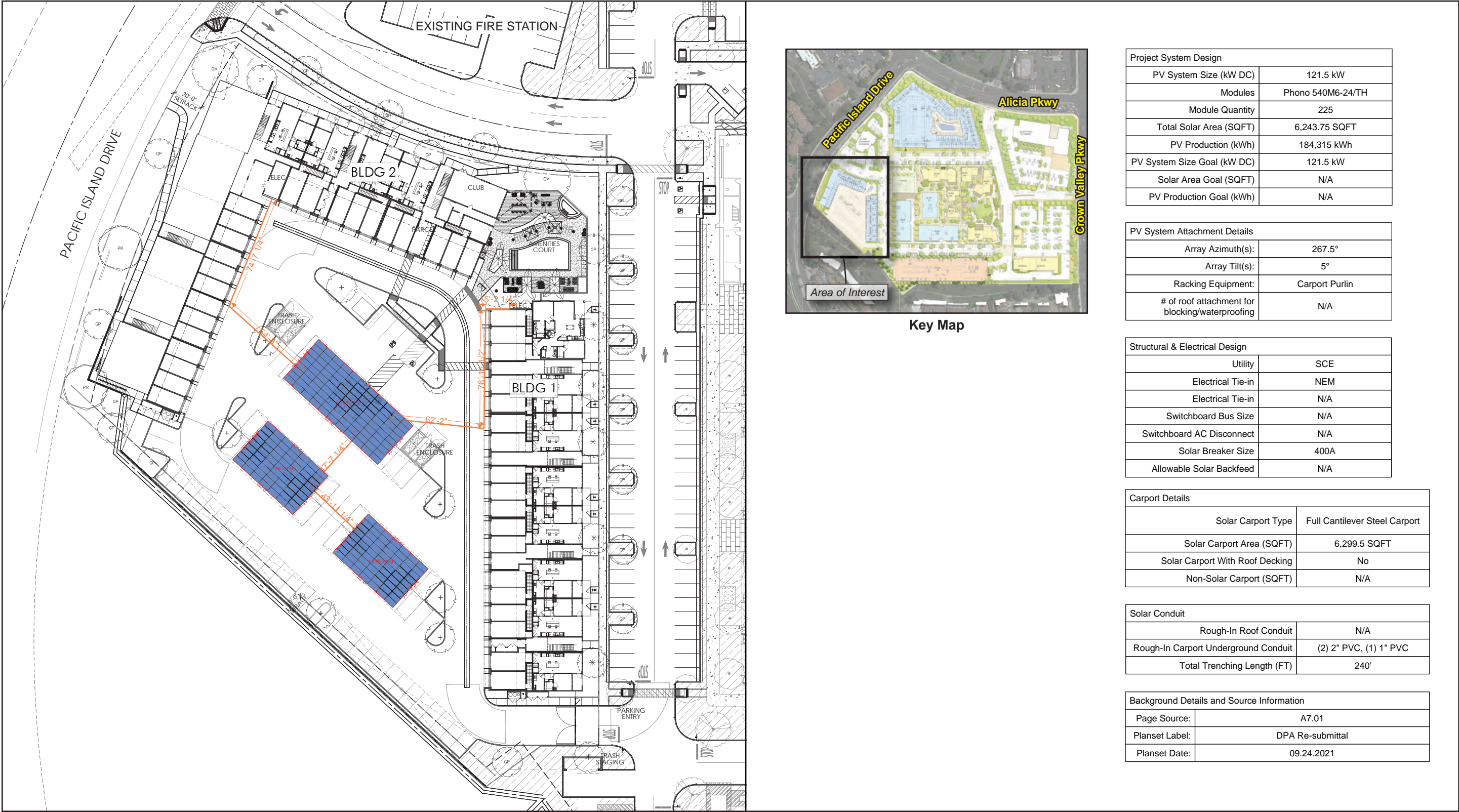
Upon implementation of regulatory requirements and plans, programs, and policies, Impacts 5.1-3 and 5.1-4 would be less than significant.

---

<sup>2</sup> The parking garage pad would be 350 feet above mean sea level



Figure 5.1-12 - Carport Photovoltaic Layout  
5. Environmental Analysis



Source: CalSolar, 2021

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

*This page intentionally left blank.*

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

#### 5.1.7 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

#### 5.1.8 Level of Significance After Mitigation

Impacts would be less than significant.

#### 5.1.9 References

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). 2011, September. Scenic Highway System.  
[http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16\\_livability/scenic\\_highways/](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_livability/scenic_highways/).

Laguna Niguel, City of. 1992. Land Use. Chapter 2 of the Laguna Niguel General Plan.  
<https://www.cityoflagunaniguel.org/132/General-Plan>.

## 5. Environmental Analysis

### AESTHETICS

*This page intentionally left blank.*