# **APPENDIX 3.1**

.

# VISUAL QUALITY/COMMUNITY CHARACTER TECHNICAL REPORT for the SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY PLAZA LINDA VERDE PROJECT

Prepared for:

San Diego State University Facilities Planning Design and Construction 5500 Campanile Drive San Diego, California 92182 Contact: Lauren Cooper

Prepared by:

# DUDEK

605 Third Street Encinitas, California 92024

# **MAY 2009**



Printed on 30% post-consumer recycled material.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Sec</u>	<u>Page No.</u>				
SUM	IMARY	OF FINDINGS		VII	
1.0	INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE			1	
	1.1	Purpose			
	1.2	Local and Reg	ional Setting		
	1.3	Project Descrip	otion		
2.0	MET	ГНОDOLOGY9			
3.0	EXISTING CONDITIONS				
	3.1	Regional Settin	1g		
	3.2	Local Setting			
	3.3	Viewshed			
	3.4	Visual Charact	er		
	3.5	3.5 Views			
		3.5.1 Public	Views for Mobile Viewers		
·		3.5.2 Private	Views		
		3.5.2 On-Site	e SDSU Campus Views		
	3.6	Lighting Chara	cteristics		
		3.6.1 Region	al and Local Setting		
		3.6.2 Policies	5		
		3.6.3 Existin	g Lighting Conditions		
4.0	SIG	IFICANCE TH	RESHOLDS		
5.0	IMP.	IMPACTS			
	5.1	Cumulative Im	pacts		
6.0	MIT	MITIGATION MEASURES55			
7.0	SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPACTS AFTER MITIGATION				
8.0	LIST OF PREPARERS				
9.0	REF	REFERENCES61			

#### APPENDIX

A SDSU Lighting Policy

#### DUDEK

i

#### INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

#### Page No.

# LIST OF FIGURES

1	Regional Map	3
2	Vicinity Map	5
3	Proposed Project	7
4	Existing Land Uses	13
5	Viewshed Map	15
6a	Viewpoint Location Map	21
6b	Existing Site Views (Views 1–4)	23
6c	Existing Site Views (Views 5–8)	25
6d	Existing Site Views (Views 9–12)	27
6e	Existing Site Views (Views 13–15)	29
7	Architectural Renderings	39
8	Mobile viewer traveling south along College Avenue – Visual Simulation 1	41
9	Mobile viewer traveling north along College Avenue – Visual Simulation 2	43

#### INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
FC	foot candles
GPS	Global Positioning System
I-8	Interstate 8
IES	Illuminating Engineering Society of North America
Proposed Project	Plaza Linda Verde project
SDSU	San Diego State University

#### INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The San Diego State University ("SDSU") Plaza Linda Verde project ("Proposed Project") is located to the south of the existing SDSU main campus boundary, north of Montezuma Road and along the western and eastern portions of College Avenue. The Project consists of the development of additional on-campus student housing and retail services to support SDSU and the surrounding community. The Proposed Project is a mixed-use development featuring groundfloor commercial space and upper-floor student housing, student apartments, additional parking facilities to accommodate increased parking demand within the area, a Campus Green featuring a public promenade, and pedestrian malls in place of existing streets/alleys linking the proposed mixed-use buildings to the main campus.

The following report assesses the potential visual changes that would occur with project implementation. The report has been prepared to provide supplemental information for an Environmental Impact Report ("EIR") being prepared for the Proposed Project. The report first provides the local and regional setting followed by a detailed description of the Proposed Project. The report then identifies the methodology that was used to complete a visual assessment of the various project components. A discussion of the existing visual character and representative views is presented following the methodology section. The report then provides the significance thresholds, analysis, results, and mitigation measure recommendations. The report concludes with a discussion of the level of significance after the proposed mitigation measures are included as part of the Project.

The Project would include the redevelopment of an area, which consists of a variety of land uses (single-family residential, student housing, institutional uses, and neighborhood commercial), which are in a blighted condition. The change in the visual environment for sensitive receptors, which primarily consisted of mobile viewers (e.g., motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists) traveling on nearby roadways within the project viewshed, were determined to be less than significant. The project components would be consistent with surrounding land uses, and streetscape improvements, along with a pedestrian oriented/mixed-use project, that have been included in the project design would help eliminate the current blighted condition present within this portion of the college community. In addition, the development would utilize an architectural theme of modern design accented by elements of the Mission Revival architectural style present in the central campus core, further reducing blighted conditions in the community.

The visual assessment identified a short-term significant impact from construction lighting that would occur due to the close proximity of existing residences and motorists along nearby roadways. Recommended mitigation measures include the shielding of lighting to avoid impacts to motorists and residences located adjacent to construction activities. Proposed lighting

mitigation shall be arranged so that direct rays will not shine on or produce glare for adjacent street traffic and residential uses. This would ensure that nighttime lighting during construction would not adversely impact mobile viewers or residences.

Potential impacts from lighting and glare were identified as significant due to the Project contributing additional lighting and a potential source for glare from the retail uses. Impacts related to the nighttime lighting would be reduced to a level below significance because mitigation has been recommended to ensure that the lighting will be shielded and oriented downward and its use will be limited only to times when needed. Potential impacts related to reflectivity or glare would be reduced to a level below significance by ensuring that the project design does not include large expanses of reflective glass or reflective metal surfaces.

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

#### 1.1 Purpose

This study has been prepared to provide supplemental information regarding the visual and community character impacts associated with the proposed SDSU Plaza Linda Verde Project.

# 1.2 Local and Regional Setting

The Proposed Project site is located to the south of the main SDSU campus and to the north of Montezuma Road, on the east and west sides of College Avenue, in the College Area within the City of San Diego (Figure 1). As seen in Figure 2 the Project is within the general boundaries of Montezuma Road to the south and southern limits of the SDSU main campus to the north, with College Avenue near the east end of the Project site and Campanile Drive to the west. The Project site is located approximately 8 miles east of downtown San Diego.

## 1.3 **Project Description**

The Proposed Project consists of the development of additional on-campus student housing and retail services to support SDSU and the surrounding community. The Proposed Project is a mixed-use development featuring ground-floor commercial and upper-floor student housing, student apartments, additional parking facilities to accommodate increased parking demand within the area, a Campus Green featuring a public promenade, and pedestrian malls in place of existing streets/alleys linking the proposed mixed-use buildings to the main campus.

The Proposed Project would be located adjacent to the main SDSU campus, which is located approximately 8 miles east of downtown San Diego (Figure 1). The existing boundaries of the SDSU campus generally are Hardy Avenue on the south, East Campus Drive on the east, 55th Street/Remington Road on the west, and Adobe Falls Road/Del Cerro Boulevard (north of Interstate 8 ["I-8"]) on the north. The Proposed Project would be developed on property located south of the existing Campus Master Plan boundary, generally between Aztec Walk and Montezuma Road (Figure 2). The land on which the Proposed Project would be developed is currently owned by SDSU, the SDSU Foundation, and private entities. Lands currently owned by private entities would be purchased by SDSU prior to development.

The Project consists of the demolition of existing structures and parking lots and is on an approximately 18-acre site located immediately south of the SDSU main campus. The development of certain portions of the Proposed Project, primarily including the pedestrian malls, would be contingent upon the vacation of certain existing vehicular rights-of-way; if the subject vacations are not approved, the Proposed Project would proceed on a modified basis.

In conjunction with the Proposed Project, SDSU also is proposing to amend the SDSU Campus Master Plan boundary such that the southern campus boundary between 55th Street and one block east of College Avenue would extend south generally from Aztec Walk to Montezuma Road.

The Proposed Project would consist of development of the following five project components (Figure 3):

- I. Mixed-Use Retail/Student Housing. This project component consists of the development of four ground-floor retail and upper-floor residential buildings located south of Hardy Avenue, north of Montezuma Road, and west and east of College Avenue. Collectively, the four buildings would contain approximately 294 apartments to house approximately 1,216 students, and also would contain approximately 75,394 square feet of university/community-serving retail uses.
- **II. Student Apartments.** This project component would consist of two four-story buildings located west of Campanile Drive, north of Montezuma Road, and south of Lindo Paseo. Collectively, the two buildings would contain approximately 96 apartments to house 416 students.
- III. Parking Facilities. A freestanding parking structure would be constructed at the northwest corner of Lindo Paseo and Montezuma Place. The structure would consist of five levels—one underground parking deck and four aboveground decks—and would provide approximately 342 parking spaces. The parking structure also would support approximately 1,815 square feet of ground-floor retail space. The mixed-use retail/student housing buildings to be developed east of College Avenue would contain underground parking for an additional 160 to 210 vehicles, depending on the ultimate configuration.
- **IV. Campus Green.** A Campus Green is planned for development south of the existing SDSU Transit Center and would consist of active and passive recreational areas for public use.
- V. Pedestrian Malls. The Proposed Project also would include two pedestrian malls, in place of existing streets/alleys, to be located along the western and eastern flanks of the main mixed-use building area. These corridors would facilitate non-motorized movement between the proposed buildings and the main campus, and they would support meeting/resting space and outdoor eating facilities associated with the adjacent retail shops. This project component would be ancillary to the mixed-use retail/student housing component and would not be essential to development of the overall Project site.



#### INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



#### INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



#### INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

# 2.0 METHODOLOGY

The following provides an overview of the methodology that was used to determine the potential change in the visual environment that would occur with the Proposed Project.

The visual assessment included a viewshed analysis to determine the area in which the proposed project components would be visible. The viewshed was determined through review of aerial photography, topographic maps, and a field visit. A photographic inventory of the surrounding area was then completed within the viewshed of the Project to determine the visual character of the area. Representative views of the Project area were selected based on review of the viewshed, viewer sensitivity, aerial photography, and field assessments to determine the views of the Proposed Project that were available. Representative views (key viewpoints) were determined based on the number of viewers and sensitivity of the viewer.

A photographic inventory within the viewshed was then completed to determine the visual resources and visual setting. Visual resources were determined through the potential presence of scenic features (both natural and man-made) and sensitivity of the view. Sensitive viewers were determined based on public vantage points, such as roadways, public lookouts, trails, or recreational uses. The field survey was also used to identify the presence or absence of sensitive receptors in relation to lighting conditions in the Project area.

Visual simulations were also used as a tool in determining the change in the visual environment through use of Global Positioning System ("GPS")-referenced field photography, modeled digital topography, architectural floor plans and elevations to create true scale three-dimensional models. These models were then used to create an accurate simulation of post-development conditions and visibility. Before and after views from two vantage points along College Avenue were analyzed and depicted.

The above data was assembled to determine the potential visual impacts in relation to significance thresholds. Visual changes and level of significance were evaluated based on the duration of the view (typically applicable to passing mobile viewers), line-of-sight in relation to whether interrupted or direct views would change, distance of the view (foreground, mid-view or distant view), and number of viewers. The visual changes were then assessed to determine whether a significant impact would result for viewers located within the viewshed of the Proposed Project in relation to California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") significance thresholds. In the event that a significant impact would result, mitigation measures were recommended to reduce the identified impact. Measures incorporated into the Project and/or recommended to avoid, minimize, and mitigate identified impacts were described. An evaluation

was completed to determine the level of significance after the proposed mitigation measures were included as part of the Proposed Project.

# 3.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

# 3.1 Regional Setting

The Proposed Project is located in the southwestern portion of San Diego County (Figure 1). The area is predominantly developed with a variety of land uses, including residential, commercial, open space, recreational, and institutional uses. I-8 provides regional access to mobile viewers in the area, which is located less than 1 mile to the north of the Project site.

The landscape in this area includes a network of canyon drainages and rolling hills that feed into the coastal river system located adjacent to I-8. Canyons include Alvarado Canyon, Mission Gorge, Murray Canyon, Murphy Canyon, Talmadge Canyon, and several unnamed canyons. The tributaries of this canyon system are part of the San Diego River system, which is oriented along I-8. With a few exceptions, the majority of the urban development has occurred on the mesa tops, while canyon hillsides and drainage bottoms have remained somewhat natural.

I-8 provides regional transportation connections to urban development for the established communities in the College Area. Communities surrounding the College Area include Talmadge, La Mesa, and Rolondo on the south of I-8 and Del Cerro, Grantville, Navajo, and Allied Gardens north of I-8. Development has also occurred within the San Diego River Valley (primarily adjacent to I-8), which includes Mission Valley and Mission Gorge.

## 3.2 Local Setting

The Proposed Project is located to the south of the existing main SDSU campus within the City of San Diego College Area community. Development in this area is located on the flatter, mesa top area adjacent to I-8, College Avenue, and Montezuma Road. The southern perimeter of the SDSU campus is located immediately adjacent to the northern portion of the Project site.

The land uses immediately surrounding the Project site include a mixture of residential, commercial, and institutional uses (Figure 4). Residential uses are located adjacent to Montezuma Road, Campanile Drive, and Lindo Paseo. The residential housing in this area is predominantly occupied by SDSU college students and includes single-family homes, multi-story apartments, and fraternity/sorority houses. The apartment buildings in the vicinity range from two-story structures to five-story structures. The tallest structures are located adjacent to the campus along Hardy Avenue, east of College Avenue, and at the southeast corner of the 55th Street/Montezuma Road intersection. Single-family homes are primarily located along Lindo Paseo and Campanile Drive. The residential uses in this area are occupied by fraternities and sororities. Commercial and institutional uses are located adjacent to College Avenue, Montezuma Place, Lindo Paseo, and Campanile Drive. These uses consist of neighborhood-

servicing commercial (e.g., gas station, coffee shops, fast food) and institutional uses associated with the SDSU campus (the Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences Building and KPBS building). These structures range in height from single-story businesses to four-story institutional uses.

The Project site is located centrally within the College Area community, which is bounded by several roadways. College Avenue and Montezuma Road provide primary access to the Project site. College Avenue is a four-lane roadway with a north/south orientation, which includes a raised center median and pedestrian facilities along both sides of the roadway within the immediate Project area. Montezuma Road is also a four-lane roadway, with an east/west orientation and a striped center median.

Both College Avenue and Montezuma Road are connected to the two-lane roadway network within the Project vicinity; roadways include Montezuma Place, Campanile Drive, Lindo Paseo, and Hardy Avenue. These roadways provide access for mobile viewers to the SDSU campus located to the north and student-serving commercial uses within the College Area community. Regional access to the Proposed Project planning area is provided via I-8, located to the north of the Proposed Project site.

#### 3.3 Viewshed

The viewshed is defined as the surrounding geographic area from which the Proposed Project is likely to be seen. The viewshed is influenced by topographic and land use patterns. The viewshed for the Proposed Project was determined in the field and through analysis of aerial and topographic maps. The viewshed of the Project area includes a limited area due to the existing developed nature of the community and the level topography.

The viewshed boundary consists of the following distances surrounding the Project site: approximately 300 feet to the north, 375 feet to the east, 200 feet to the south, and 450 feet to the west. Views of the Project site from a distance greater than 0.25 mile are generally blocked or are limited by existing development, terrain, elevations, or viewing angles and landforms. The viewshed is depicted in Figure 5.



Visual Quality/Community Character Technical Report



Figure 4 Existing Land Uses

# DUDEK

INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

14

6243-4 May 2009



#### INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

#### 3.4 Visual Character

The Proposed Project is located in a visual environment that consists of an urbanized area located to the south of the SDSU campus. The area is generally blighted, with a variety of non-unified land uses. The visual character can be described as a developed area with a wide variety of land uses (commercial, residential, and institutional).

The Project area is located within a specific redevelopment zone as outlined in the College Community Redevelopment Plan. The primary objective of this plan is to eliminate blighted conditions and rehabilitate, renovate, and redevelop underutilized areas. This area's inclusion in this plan gives evidence of the existing run-down nature of the land uses being proposed for redevelopment as part of the Project.

The mixture of multi- and single-family residential units intermixed with fraternities and sororities and commercial establishments, including restaurants, gas stations, and student-service oriented businesses, defines the general visual character of the built environment in the Project area. The existing visual character present at each project component location is provided below.

#### **Building 1**

This project component is bounded by College Avenue to the east and residential uses and a ministry to the west. Hardy Avenue is located to the north, and Lindo Paseo is located to the south; both are two-lane roadways. The site currently supports two buildings that are used for campus administrative functions. The southernmost parcels (5164 College Avenue and 5140 College Avenue) serve as "O Lot," which is a component of the campus parking system. O Lot currently supplies 88 parking spaces to the campus inventory. Pedestrian facilities are located along the perimeter of College Avenue and Lindo Paseo.

#### **Building 2**

This project component is located at the northwest intersection of Montezuma Road and College Avenue. The area proposed for development currently supports approximately 39 parking spaces adjacent to College Avenue and parking adjacent to Montezuma Place. The parking lot contains landscaping along the perimeter of the lot and lighting fixtures.

#### **Building 3**

This project component is located to the north of Lindo Paseo between College Avenue and Campanile Drive. The area consists of a two-story apartment complex along the eastern portion of the parcel, which is oriented around a pool in the middle of the structure. A single-family

residence with a rear detached unit is located to the west of the apartment building. Both buildings are fronted by the Lindo Paseo sidewalk.

#### **Building 4**

This project component is located on three different parcels at the northeast corner of Montezuma Road and College Avenue. A gas station is located on the southernmost parcel, which includes a food mart and service repair area. A fast food restaurant is located to the north of the gas station. A two-story commercial structure, which includes a variety of student-servicing retail, is located at the northeast intersection of College Avenue and Lindo Paseo. An alley is located along the eastern portion of the parcels, which separates the commercial uses from student housing. Sidewalks along College Avenue line these commercial buildings.

#### **Building 5**

This project component is located on four different parcels along the eastern portion of College Avenue between a pedestrian bridge that provides access over College Avenue and Lindo Paseo. The parcels include food services, retail, and a convenience store. College Avenue sidewalks line the western portion of the parcels. An alley is located along the eastern portion of the parcels, which separates the commercial uses from campus student housing.

#### **Building 6**

This project component is located on three parcels at the southwest intersection of Campanile Drive and Lindo Paseo. A parking lot is located adjacent to Campanile Drive that provides approximately 38 parking spaces for students and faculty. Two single-family residences currently occupied by fraternities are located to the east of the parking lot.

#### **Building 7**

This project component is located on three parcels at the northwest intersection of Campanile Drive and Montezuma Road. The parcels include two-story residences, which currently house fraternities and/or sororities. Montezuma Road and Campanile Drive sidewalks line the southern and eastern edges of this Project site, respectively.

#### Campus Green

Campus Green is located on three different parcels to the north of Hardy Avenue and west of College Avenue. The area includes approximately 123 parking spaces and a vacant lot located adjacent to a transportation center for buses that provide service to SDSU students and faculty.

DUDEK

In summary, the Proposed Project is located in an urbanized area characterized by a variety of land uses. The community includes student-servicing commercial and residential uses that are predominantly occupied by college students. Views of the Project area are primarily available for passing mobile viewers, which consist of motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists on adjacent streets. Scattered residences located within the viewshed of the Project area are also afforded project area views.

#### 3.5 Views

Sensitive viewpoints generally include surrounding residences, recreational areas, and designated scenic roads. The following descriptions identify viewer groups within the project area. Viewer responses to visual changes were inferred from a variety of factors, including view exposures, type of viewer, number of viewers, duration of view, and viewer activities. Viewer exposure includes distance and viewing angle.

#### 3.5.1 Public Views for Mobile Viewers

Mobile viewers consist of observers on an official road/highway or recreational/hiking trail with views of the project area. The Project site is generally visible from roadways located adjacent to project components. No recreational/hiking trails were identified within the viewshed of the Project area; however, as noted below, sidewalks are located throughout the Project area. Figure 6a provides the location of representative viewpoints of existing views from vantage points surrounding the Proposed Project site. Figures 6b through 6e provide representative views for viewpoints identified within the viewshed of the Proposed Project area (see Section 3.3 for a discussion of the Project area viewshed).

#### Montezuma Road

Starting at the intersection of Montezuma Road/College Avenue, traveling west, mobile viewers are afforded direct views into the immediate southern portion of the site consisting of Buildings 2 and 4 (Figure 6d, Views 11 and 12). A gas station is visible along the eastern portion of College Avenue, and a parking lot is visible along the western portion of College Avenue. As mobile viewers continue west, past College Avenue, views are available of commercial uses consisting of a small commercial center and fast food restaurants. As mobile viewers proceed west, views change to those of single-family residential and multi-story apartment buildings (Figure 6b, Views 1 and 2). Four-story apartment buildings can be seen along the northern portion of Montezuma Road near 55th Street, and two-story apartment buildings are located along the southern portion of the roadway. Views for mobile viewers also include a church located at the southeast intersection of Campanile Drive/Montezuma Road.

Once Montezuma Road travelers proceed east of College Avenue, foreground views consist of apartments and distant views consist of institutional uses of varying heights. Views of distant ridgelines and/or scenic vistas are not available along this roadway due to structures which block distant views.

#### **College** Avenue

At the intersection of Montezuma Road, northbound College Avenue viewers are afforded direct views of neighborhood commercial and parking lots located adjacent to College Avenue. Views are also available of the SDSU campus and pedestrian bridge. For southbound College Avenue viewers, views of the Project area become available after passing beneath the pedestrian bridge. Views along this roadway consist of the SDSU transportation center, parking lots, residential uses, and commercial uses (Figure 6c, View 7). The overall visual experience along College Avenue includes an urbanized four-lane roadway with low-rise buildings located immediately adjacent to the roadway, consisting of commercial, residential, and institutional uses. Views of distant ridgelines and/or scenic vistas are not available along this roadway because structures block distant views.

#### Lindo Paseo

At the intersection of College Avenue, westbound Lindo Paseo travelers are afforded foreground views of a parking lot and fraternities and sororities (Figure 6d, View 9). Direct views of SDSU institutional uses, parking structures, and the KPBS building are also afforded for the viewer (Figure 6b, View 3). Structures vary in height from single-story residences to the four-story KPBS building. At the intersection of Campanile Drive/Lindo Paseo, eastbound Lindo Paseo travelers are afforded foreground views of a two-story apartment building, a two-story office building, and parking lots located near College Avenue (Figure 6b, View 4 and Figure 6e, View 15). Views along this roadway also consist of neighborhood-servicing commercial located along the eastern portion of College Avenue (Figure 6e, View 14). The overall visual experience along Lindo Paseo is characterized by an urbanized area with a variety of land uses. The blighted nature of the community is noticeable along this roadway. Existing structures block distant views of ridgelines from this location.



#### INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK







View 3: View of Building 6 for motorists traveling westbound along Lindo Paseo.



View 2: View of Building 7 for motorists traveling eastbound along Montezuma Road.



View 4: View of Building 6 for motorists traveling eastbound along Lindo Paseo.

SDSU Plaza Linda Verde

Visual Quality/Community Character Technical Report



Figure 6b Existing Site Views

INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

24

# Visual Quality/Community Character Technical Report for the San Diego State University Plaza Linda Verde Project

6243-4 May 2009


View 5: View of Building 7 for motorists traveling southbound along Campanile Drive.



View 7: View of Buildings 1 and 5 for motorists traveling southbound on College Avenue.



View 6: View of Campus Green and Building 1 for motorists traveling eastbound on Hardy Avenue.



View 8: View of Buildings 1 and 5 for pedestrians looking south along the pedestrian bridge on College Avenue.

SDSU Plaza Linda Verde

Visual Quality/Community Character Technical Report



Figure 6c Existing Site Views

# DUDEK

26

# Visual Quality/Community Character Technical Report for the San Diego State University Plaza Linda Verde Project

6243-4 May 2009



View 9: View of Buildings 1, 2, 4, and 5 from student housing looking west.



View 11: View of Buildings 2 and 4 for motorists traveling westbound on Montezuma Road.



View 10: View of Building 4 from alleyway located to the west of student housing.



View 12: View of Buildings 2 and 4 for motorists traveling eastbound on Montezuma Road.

SDSU Plaza Linda Verde

Visual Quality/Community Character Technical Report



Figure 6d **Existing Site Views** 

# DUDEK

28

# Visual Quality/Community Character Technical Report for the San Diego State University Plaza Linda Verde Project

INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

6243-4 May 2009



View 13: View of Buildings 1 and 3 for motorists traveling northbound along Montezuma Place.



View 14: View of Buildings 4 and 5 for motorists traveling southbound along College Avenue.



View 15: View of Buildings 1, 2, and 3 for motorists traveling eastbound on Lindo Paseo.

SDSU Plaza Linda Verde

Visual Quality/Community Character Technical Report



Figure 6e Existing Site Views

# DUDEK

30

# **Campanile Drive**

At the intersection of Hardy Avenue/Campanile Drive, southbound Campanile Drive, travelers are afforded views of a variety of land uses, including the SDSU Gateway Center and the KPBS building, which have four stories (Figure 6c, View 5). Institutional uses, including the Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences Building, are also located along the eastern portion of the roadway between Lindo Paseo and Hardy Avenue. Mobile viewers traveling south from the Lindo Paseo/Campanile Drive intersection are afforded direct views of residential uses and a parking lot. Distant views of ridgelines are not available from this location as any potential views are blocked by buildings adjacent to the roadway.

# Hardy Avenue

At the intersection of College Avenue/Hardy Avenue, eastbound Hardy Avenue travelers are afforded views of residential uses ranging from single-family residential to five-story-high apartment buildings (Figure 6c, View 6). Views of campus open spaces to the north are available from the intersection of Hardy Drive/Campanile Drive. Views are also available of neighborhood commercial uses located along the eastern portion of College Avenue. Distant views of ridgelines are not available from this location, as any potential views are blocked by buildings located adjacent to the roadway.

# **Montezuma Place**

Montezuma Place is a two-lane street that provides access to commercial uses located adjacent to College Avenue and Montezuma Road. Views available for mobile viewers passing along Montezuma Place include a paved parking lot and a strip mall to the west (Figure 6e, View 13). Distant views of ridgelines are not available because they are blocked by structures.

In summary, mobile viewers passing along roadways near the Project site are provided views of an urbanized area consisting of a variety of land uses ranging from single-family residential to multi-story apartment complexes. There is a mixture of neighborhood-serving commercial uses located adjacent to Montezuma Road and College Avenue. Distant views of vistas or ridgelines are not available for mobile viewers due to the built-up nature of this urban environment.

# Scenic Highways

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) designates highways as scenic in order to protect and enhance California's natural beauty and to protect the social and economic values provided by the state's scenic resources. According to the Caltrans Scenic Highway Mapping

System, there are no officially designated state highway resources within the Project area (Caltrans 2009).

#### Parks/Outdoor Uses

As depicted on Figure 5, no parks or recreation trails with views of the Proposed Project are located within the project viewshed.

#### 3.5.2 **Private Views**

Private views of the Project site are available from scattered residences located immediately adjacent to proposed structures along the eastern portion of College Avenue, and from scattered residences along Lindo Paseo, Hardy Avenue, Montezuma Road, and Campanile Drive. In general, views are available to a limited number of private viewers that are located at the same elevation of the Proposed Project. Existing views available to these residences consist of fairly blighted low-rise housing structures intermixed with commercial and institutional buildings.

# 3.5.2 On-Site SDSU Campus Views

The SDSU campus is located to the north of the Project site. Campus land uses along the southern campus border consist of student gathering spaces, walkways (including the pedestrian sky bridge over College Avenue), and the SDSU transit center. On-site campus views of the northern portion of the Project area include a variety of land uses consisting of commercial/retail uses (Figure 6c, View 8). Views of the eastern portion of the Project site are available from student housing located to the east of College Avenue (Figure 6d, View 10).

# 3.6 Lighting Characteristics

# 3.6.1 Regional and Local Setting

Due to the Project's location within an urbanized area of San Diego, urban lights are characteristic of the Project area. Primary light sources during the evening hours within the vicinity of the Project include Tony Gwyn Stadium and Aztec Recreation Center. Due to the urbanized nature of the Project area, several street lights, lights from motorists, commercial signage, and various residential structure lights are visible. These sources contribute to the existing evening light environment of the area.

# 3.6.2 Policies

# **SDSU Lighting Policy**

SDSU has adopted a lighting policy that is to be incorporated into the exterior campus design considerations (SDSU Physical Master Plan, Phase I, pp. 157–160). The primary goal of SDSU's lighting policy is to achieve safety and security on all walkways and parking areas. At the same time, the lighting systems should strengthen the public's impression of the SDSU campus by accentuating unique architectural qualities and enhancing pedestrian activities (SDSU Physical Master Plan, Phase I, pp. 157–160). The full text of this lighting policy is included in Appendix A. The impetus for establishing this directive lies in the university's interest in reducing light impacts because they affect astronomical research, particularly at the Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories.

SDSU's exterior lighting design for walkways, parking lots, and streets requires compliance with standards published by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America ("IES"). For example, IES publishes specific values for recommended light levels expressed in foot candles ("FC") and average to minimum uniformity ratios. These standards are applied to four distinct classes of walkways/sidewalks to meet IES requisites for pedestrian identification at a distance or special pedestrian security. SDSU also applies IES standards for parking lots, due to the large number of vehicles present at night.

SDSU's lighting policy also voluntarily follows the adopted ordinances of the City of San Diego for any outdoor lighting upgrades.

# 3.6.3 Existing Lighting Conditions

The Proposed Project area is located in an existing urban area that is exposed to night lighting. Roadways and parking lot street lights provide additional light sources to the urban setting. Lighting types generally consist of high-pressure sodium fixtures in parking lots, florescent fixtures in buildings, and porch/window lights for residences.

# 4.0 SIGNIFICANCE THRESHOLDS

The Proposed Project would result in a significant impact if it would:

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

The above guidelines focus on measuring impacts to visual character and quality, as required by Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. This is accomplished by comparing the existing visual environment with that resulting from changes due to the Proposed Project.

# 5.0 IMPACTS

# Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

There are no scenic vistas identified in the project area; therefore, the Project would not create an adverse effect on a designated scenic vista. In addition, the Project site is within an existing developed community and is not in an area noted for scenic vistas. Distant views are not available due to the built-up nature of the community. Therefore, due to the lack of a designated scenic vista on the Project site or within the defined Project viewshed (Figure 5), the Project would have no impact on a scenic vista.

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

The Project site is not within the viewshed of a state scenic highway. Furthermore, scenic resources were not identified within applicable planning documents or observed during the field survey within the surrounding area. There are no significant mature trees, rock outcroppings, community identification symbols, or landmarks that would be impacted due to project implementation. The Project would have no impact on scenic resources within the project area.

# Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

# Construction

Construction-related impacts would cause a temporary visual change by removing or altering existing visual elements that contribute to the visual environment. Examples of visual changes include grading and demolished structures and the presence of construction equipment, materials, signs, and staging areas.

Construction-related activities would be visible by the public from adjacent roadways (e.g., Montezuma Road, College Avenue). Graded surfaces, construction materials, equipment, and truck traffic would be visible. Soil would be stockpiled, and equipment for grading activities would be staged at various locations. Since these impacts are short term and would not be present following the completion of the Project, they are considered to have a less-than-significant impact as the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings during construction.

#### Operation

General Visual Character: Development of the Project would result in a change in the visual appearance of the Project site. The Project includes the redevelopment of an existing blighted area. The Project includes the removal of existing structures, which consist of commercial uses, multi-family homes, and single-family homes. As seen in Figure 7, the project design includes a mixture of retail, residential uses, and gathering locations along pedestrian malls.

Four buildings (Buildings 1, 2, 4, and 5) are proposed along College Avenue (Figure 3) between Montezuma Road to the south and the pedestrian bridge to the north. These buildings would include mixed uses and would be five stories in height (Figures 8 and 9). The first story would include retail uses, and the remaining four stories would include student apartments (see Figure 7 for architectural renderings). Pedestrian malls would be located to the west and east of the proposed buildings to provide access to and from the main SDSU campus.

A parking structure (Building 3) is proposed at the northwest corner of Montezuma Place/Lindo Paseo (Figure 3). The parking structure would be five stories above grade. A portion of the first level along the eastern portion of the site would include retail uses. A pedestrian mall would be provided along the eastern portion of the building to provide access to retail uses, the surrounding community, and SDSU.

Apartment uses (Buildings 6 and 7) are also proposed along Campanile Drive between Lindo Paseo and Montezuma Road along the western portion of the roadway. The Project proposes four-story apartment buildings at this location (Figure 3). In addition, an open space area is proposed adjacent to the SDSU transit center, which would consist of an active and passive recreation area to allow for informal activities and a gathering location. Figure 7 (View 4) provides an architectural rendering of the proposed Campus Green.

The Proposed Project area is surrounded by an assortment of land uses (Figure 4). Although, the proposed land uses would generally be of higher density than those existing, the proposed design complements other redevelopment in the Project area. In addition, the Proposed Project would include a mixture of land uses connected by pedestrian malls, which would help provide a more inviting, unified community environment.



View 1: View looking south through the Campus Green to Plaza Linda Verde A wide pedestrian mall and green space connect Plaza Linda Verde to the transit station at Aztec Walk, creating a lively park with outside dining and informal recreation.



View 4: View looking north from Lindo Paseo Montezuma Place, currently an alley, is transformed to a bustling pedestrian corridor leading north to the transit center. Flanked on both sides by ground level retail/commercial, Montezuma Promenade brings the community directly to the large open space, buses, and trolley station.

Source: Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC 2009

SDSU Plaza Linda Verde

Visual Quality/Community Character Technical Report





Linda Verde Linda Verde.



View 3: View looking north from Lindo Paseo, East of College Avenue A former service alley is now a retail pedestrian corridor, flanked by active, ground floor retail and open spaces that lead pedestrians to the bridge over College Avenue.



View 2: View looking south on College Avenue from bridge to the new Plaza College Avenue is transformed into a lively mixed-use, transit-oriented neighborhood by Plaza

Figure 7

**Architectural Renderings** 

DUDEK







The Proposed Project proposes maximum building heights of five-story structures, which is generally consistent with the College Area Community Plan (City of San Diego 2002). The heights of the proposed structures are also consistent with nearby buildings, including SDSU dormitories (six- to eight-story structures). The tallest structures proposed (five stories) are sited for placement along College Avenue near the main gateway to the SDSU campus and college community (Figures 8 and 9). The Project would therefore be consistent with visual land use patterns in the area by providing structures that do not exceed planned development for the area and are consistent with existing structures in the viewshed of the Project area. Therefore, the Project would not exceed the allowable height or bulk regulations and existing patterns of development within the planning area.

The four-story structures proposed along Campanile Drive are consistent with surrounding uses (four-story KPBS building located adjacent to the northern limits of buildings 6 and 7 [Figure 6b, View 3]), and larger four-story apartment buildings west along Montezuma Road [Figure 6b, View 1]). Therefore, the mass, bulk, and scale of the proposed Buildings 6 and 7 would be consistent with the existing community character.

In summary, the Proposed Project includes structures of a similar height to those in the surrounding community. Furthermore, the Project would include a pedestrian-oriented/mixed-use community that would enhance the blighted character of the existing neighborhood. Although the Project would represent a significant change compared to the existing condition, this change would be positive. Therefore the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings and no mitigation is required.

# **Architectural Style**

The Proposed Project would utilize several architectural themes. These include the modern designs present in many redeveloping areas in San Diego, accented by elements of the Mission Revival architectural style present in the central campus core. First-floor indoor spaces would be accented by exterior gathering/dining spaces present along the pedestrian malls. Although the Project would represent a significant architectural change compared to the existing condition, this change would be positive. Therefore the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings and no mitigation is required.

# **Public Views**

Figure 5 provides a viewshed map of the Proposed Project, and Figures 6a through 6e provide existing representative views available for mobile viewers along roadways adjacent to the Project

site. Figure 7 provides architectural renderings of the proposed project design to demonstrate the visual appearance of the Project upon completion. Figures 8 and 9 provide before and after visual simulations of the Proposed Project for mobile viewers passing north and south along College Avenue. Visual simulations were prepared for views of the project components. Project impacts to visual character available from public views are summarized below.

#### Mobile Viewers (Roadways).

Views of the Proposed Project components are available from the following public roadways within the viewshed of the project: College Avenue, Montezuma Road, Lindo Paseo, Campanile Drive, Hardy Avenue, and Montezuma Place. The following discussion identifies the visual change that would occur for mobile viewers along these roadways.

#### **College** Avenue

College Avenue is a four-lane roadway with a north/south orientation.

Starting south of the Project site at the Montezuma Road/College Avenue intersection, Buildings 2 and 4 would be visible to northbound travelers (Figure 8, Existing View). Views would change from those of a parking lot, apartment building, and neighborhood commercial uses, which are in a blighted condition, to a five-story, mixed-use development with landscaping located along the roadway (Figure 8, Visual Simulation). As seen in Figure 8, retail uses would be located along the first story, and apartment uses would be on the remaining four stories. The landscaping along the perimeter of the proposed buildings would shield a large percentage of the structure from mobile viewers, resulting in mostly interrupted views of the proposed buildings.

Starting north of the Project site at the pedestrian bridge that passes over College Avenue, the proposed Buildings 1 and 5 would be visible to southbound mobile viewers along College Avenue (Figure 9, Existing View). The views would change from those of neighborhood commercial uses located along the eastern portion of the roadway and an apartment building to a five-story, mixed-use development with landscape treatments located along the roadway (Figure 9, Visual Simulation). Views of the Campus Green would also be available, which will alter the visual experience from that of a parking lot to various trees planted in an area that will be used for passive recreation. Development of the project components would consist of approximately 600 feet of frontage along College Avenue.

The Project would introduce vertical elements of a greater height than those structures currently located along College Avenue. The introduction of these structures would include redevelopment of structures that are in a blighted condition and would be similar in height to existing land uses. The Project would represent a significant change compared to the existing condition; however,

this change would be positive. Therefore the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings and no mitigation is required.

#### Montezuma Road

Views of the proposed development that are available for a passing traveler includes the southern portion of Buildings 2 and 4 and the southern perimeter of Building 7.

#### Views of Buildings 2 and 4

The visual experience along this roadway would change from that of commercial uses and a parking lot to a five-story, mixed-use development. The introduction of proposed uses near the intersection of Montezuma Road/College Avenue would include replacement of existing structures in a blighted condition with taller, mixed-use structures (see Figure 9 for a visual simulation). The mixed-use structures would have five stories and would replace existing one-story commercial uses and a parking lot. Although the Project would include the redevelopment of existing structures that would alter the existing condition, this change would be positive, as it would reduce blighted conditions. Therefore the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings and no mitigation is required.

#### Views of Building 7

Views of Building 7 would be available for a passing motorist near the intersection of Montezuma Road/Campanile Drive. Views would change from that of two-story apartment buildings and single-family homes to a four-story apartment building. The proposed four-story apartment building would be consistent with the visual experience for mobile viewers along Montezuma Road, given the presence of other similar structures (Figure 6b, View 1). Proposed Building 7 would also include landscaping along Montezuma Road that would result in partial shielding of the proposed building. Although the Proposed Project would change the visual experience for Montezuma Road mobile viewers, it would result in a positive change, as it would reduce the blighted condition in the area. The project design utilizes similar massing and modern architectural design themes, accented by elements of the Mission Revival architectural style present in the central campus core. Therefore, the development would result in a positive visual change and would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings.

#### Lindo Paseo

Views of Buildings 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7 would be available for passing mobile viewers along Lindo Paseo. The view of each building is described below.

#### Views of Buildings 1 and 2

At the intersection of College Avenue/Lindo Paseo, westbound mobile viewers would have direct views of the southern portion of Building 1 and the northern portion of Building 2. Views of these buildings at this location would change from those of a parking lot with intuitional uses associated with SDSU located to the north and commercial uses located to the south, to those of retail uses on the first floor and apartments on the remaining four stories. Landscaping consisting of mature trees would be located near the intersection of College Avenue/Lindo Paseo (Figure 7). Views would also be available of the loading docks that will be used to service the retail uses at Buildings 1 and 2. Although the Project would represent a significant change compared to the existing condition, this change would be positive, as it would reduce blighted conditions. Therefore the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings and no mitigation is required.

#### Views of Building 3

Views of Building 3 would be available along Lindo Paseo, which would consist of a four-story parking structure with retail uses along the eastern perimeter of the building. The building height and mass would be consistent with other structures in the area, which include the SDSU Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences Building (approximately three stories) and the KPBS building (four stories). Building 3 would be located on a parcel that consists of a single-family home and a two-story apartment building. The visual experience would change from that of a two-story apartment building to a four-story parking structure with retail uses along the eastern perimeter. The visual experience would not be substantially altered for mobile viewers at this location, as the height of the structure would be consistent with nearby uses and landscaping would be provided along the southern limits of the structure, which would provide interrupted views of the building at this location. Although the Project would include the redevelopment of existing structures that would alter the existing condition, this change would be positive, as it would reduce blighted conditions. Therefore the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings and no mitigation is required.

# Views of Buildings 6 and 7

Views of Buildings 6 and 7 would be available for mobile viewers passing along Lindo Paseo, which includes a four-story apartment building located in an area that consists of a parking lot and single-family homes. The existing visual experience consists of the KPBS building located at the northwest intersection of Campanile Drive/Lindo Paseo and views of distant multi-family buildings located along Montezuma Road. Views near Building 6 would change to those of a four-story apartment building located adjacent to the four-story KPBS building. The proposed Building 6 would be taller than adjacent structures located immediately adjacent to the west, consisting of single-family homes; however, it would be consistent with the existing visual character for the viewer's experience along this roadway. The proposed building would also provide landscaping along the perimeter of the site that would enhance the visual experience for mobile viewers. Although the Project would include the redevelopment of existing structures that would alter the existing condition, this change would be positive, as it would reduce blighted conditions. Therefore the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings and no mitigation is required.

# **Campanile** Drive

Two buildings (Buildings 6 and 7) are proposed for development along Campanile Drive between Lindo Paseo and Montezuma Road. Views along the roadway include institutional uses north of Lindo Paseo consisting of the four-story KPBS building and the SDSU Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences Building (approximately three stories). Views are also available of the SDSU main campus, single-family residential, and multi-family structures. The visual experience for mobile viewers traveling along this roadway would change from that of a parking lot and two-story multi-family buildings to Buildings 6 and 7, which include four-story apartment buildings. Although the Proposed Project would change the visual experience for mobile viewers passing along Campanile Drive near Buildings 6 and 7, it would not result in substantial degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. The project design includes a development that would utilize a modern architectural design, accented by elements of the Mission Revival architectural style present in the central campus core, to ensure a development that is aesthetically pleasing. Although the Project would include the redevelopment of existing structures that would alter the existing condition, this change would be positive, as it would reduce blighted conditions. Therefore the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings and no mitigation is required.

#### Hardy Avenue

The visual experience along this roadway includes a two-story and a five-story apartment building, a parking lot, and distant views of neighborhood commercial uses located along the eastern portion of College Avenue to the east and the SDSU campus to the north. Under the proposed condition, views would change to those of Campus Green consisting of trees that would provide a passive area for meeting and recreational purposes located adjacent to the existing five-story apartment complex (Figure 7). Views would also be available of the western portion of Building 1, which consists of a five-story, mixed-use building located along College Avenue. The driving experience would not be substantially altered for mobile viewers along this roadway; views would not be substantially degraded, as the Project consists of a redevelopment project that would reduce blighted conditions in the area. Landscaping would be provided along the perimeter of the Campus Green, in addition to the walkway that would be provided to the west of Building 1 that would provide pedestrian access to the mixed uses proposed along College Avenue and the SDSU campus to the north (Figure 7). Although the Project would include the redevelopment of existing structures that would alter the existing condition, this change would be positive, as it would reduce blighted conditions. Therefore the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings and no mitigation is required.

#### Montezuma Place

Montezuma Place is a two-lane roadway with a north/south orientation, located to the west of College Avenue between Montezuma Road and Lindo Paseo. Views for motorists along this roadway consist of commercial uses and parking lots. Distant views of vistas or scenic resources are not available due to the developed nature of the area. The introduction of proposed uses along the eastern portion of Montezuma Place would include redevelopment of an existing parking lot with new structures. Although the Proposed Project would change the visual experience for Montezuma Place mobile viewers, it would result in a positive change given the existing blighted condition. The project design utilizes similar massing and modern architectural design themes, accented by elements of the Mission Revival architectural style present in the central campus core. Therefore, the development would result in a positive visual change and would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings.

In summary, the project design would minimize the Project's effect on mobile viewers. The Project would incorporate landscaping along the project frontage adjacent to roadways, including landscaped walkways along College Avenue. The proposed landscaping would partially screen views looking into the site from adjacent roadways. Furthermore, the building design would

utilize an architectural theme of modern design, accented by elements of the Mission Revival architectural style, which would help improve the blighted conditions currently present in the area. Therefore the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings

#### **Parks and Trails**

As depicted on Figure 5, no parks or recreation trails with views of the Proposed Project are located within the project viewshed. Therefore no impacts would result to recreational resources.

#### **Private Views**

Short-range views of the Proposed Project are available from several surrounding properties. Views of distant vistas are not currently available from these residences due to the developed nature of the surrounding neighborhood. Although the Proposed Project would change the visual experience for private viewers, it would result in a positive change given the existing blighted condition. The introduction of new buildings would positively alter the existing visual experience, as the Proposed Project would introduce a uniformly designed mixed-use community into a currently blighted area. Therefore, the development would result in a positive visual change and would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings

#### Campus Views

As seen in Figure 5, views of the Project site are available for campus viewers located along the southern portion of campus near the Campus Conference Center and Student Union buildings. Views are also available from the College Avenue pedestrian bridge (see Figure 9 for a visual simulation located near the pedestrian bridge). Student housing located to the east of Buildings 4 and 5 would also have views of the project components. Views of the project components from the southern portion of campus and the pedestrian bridge would be of the Campus Green, which includes passive recreational uses and the northern façade of Buildings 1 and 5 (Figure 7). Views would change from those of a parking lot, a two-story apartment building, and neighborhood commercial uses to a Campus Green and a five-story mixed-use development. Views from the student housing located to the east of Buildings 4 and 5 would change to those of a mixed-use commercial/residential neighborhood. Although the Project would include the redevelopment of existing structures that would alter the visual experience for campus viewers, it would result in a positive change given the existing blighted condition. Therefore the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings and no mitigation is required.

Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

#### Construction

Light and glare associated with the existing Project site are presently generated by the existing land uses (commercial and residential uses). Short-term light and glare impacts associated with construction activity would likely be limited to nighttime lighting necessary for security purposes. There are residential uses in close proximity to the development site that could be potentially affected by the lighting. In the absence of shielding of lighting, impacts to mobile viewers or adjacent residences would result in a short-term light and glare impact. (See Section 6.0, Mitigation Measure 1.)

#### Operation

#### Lighting

The project components are located in an urbanized area that includes a multitude of lighting sources. Night lighting sources in the area include residential (single-family and apartments), institutional uses (SDSU campus), and commercial uses. The Project would result in the removal of existing light sources (apartments, parking lot lights, commercial uses) and introduce new street, pedestrian mall, and interior building light sources. Given the increased density of both retail and housing into the Project area, the amount of lighting would increase compared to the existing condition.

The introduction of some amount of nighttime light is inevitable, due to safety requirements (e.g., street and parking lot lighting). With the exception of necessary security lighting, illumination of the project components would be limited to areas and hours of activity associated with retail uses. The addition of additional lighting to the project area would result in a potentially significant impact, therefore mitigation is provided. (See Section 6.0, Mitigation Measure 2.)

#### Glare

The Project site is located adjacent to several roadways (Montezuma Road, College Avenue, Campanile Drive, Lindo Paseo, and Hardy Avenue); therefore, glare that could result from the Project could create annoyances to residences and/or hazards to passing mobile viewers along adjacent roadways. Further, the Proposed Project may result in significant reflective surfaces, therefore resulting in a new source of glare. This impact may be potentially significant; therefore, mitigation is incorporated. (See Section 6.0, Mitigation Measure 3.)

# 5.1 Cumulative Impacts

From a cumulative visual perspective, the vicinity is generally classified as a blighted area with a variety of student-serving uses. The visual environment consists of multi- and single-family residential units intermixed with fraternities and sororities and commercial establishments, including restaurants, gas stations, and student-service-oriented businesses. The Project area includes developed lands consisting of parking lots, apartments, commercial uses, and both single-family and multi-family uses predominantly occupied by college students. Views of the Project area are primarily available from College Avenue, Montezuma Road, Lindo Paseo, Campanile Drive, Hardy Avenue, and Montezuma Way.

The Proposed Project includes the development of several components located to the south of the main SDSU campus within a generally blighted community that consists of a variety of student-serving land uses. Structures would vary in height from four to five stories, and landscaping would be included around the perimeter of the structures. In addition, walkways will be provided to provide connections to the surrounding community.

When combined with the Proposed Project, other redevelopment projects occurring both on and off campus, in the general vicinity of the project, would all contribute to the changing visual character of the project area. Other known projects in the area consist of redevelopment projects that include institutional, fraternity/sorority uses, condominium, and various residential uses. With implementation of the Proposed Project combined with the cumulative projects, the visual environment would continue to be dominated by infill development. The Proposed Project includes a design that allows the proposed structures to be integrated into the existing community and the SDSU campus located to the north, to create development areas that will blend with the visual setting and reduce the blighted areas in the community. The Project would therefore be a visual extension of the surrounding visual pattern of student housing and the assortment of student-serving commercial development. Because the Project and cumulative projects would positively alter the visual experience of a currently blighted area, cumulative impacts are considered less than significant.

The Proposed Project will result in redevelopment of an area in a blighted condition, including new buildings and lighting. The campus, and the surrounding college community, is mostly urbanized. All project components will be reviewed for compliance with the lighting and glare policies contained in SDSU's Physical Master Plan (SDSU Physical Master Plan, Phase I, pp. 157–160) to ensure compatibility with the existing campus environment and nearby community. New lighting and potential impacts that may result from glare will comply with SDSU's Physical Master Plan requirements including shielding and focusing lighting away from the surrounding uses that ensure appropriate and compatible lighting and design within the

existing urban environment. All cumulative projects will also be required to meet lighting and glare requirements in accordance with SDSU requirements. Adherence with these standards would eliminate the potential for lighting and glare impacts from occurring on a cumulatively considerable scale. Therefore given current regulations, and the project area being located within an urban environment, there would not be significant cumulative impacts that would introduce a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

# 6.0 MITIGATION MEASURES

- 1. During construction activities, the construction contractor shall ensure that temporary construction-related security lighting is arranged so that direct rays will not shine on or produce glare for adjacent street traffic and residential uses.
- 2. In order to minimize impacts from lighting, all light fixtures shall be shielded away from sensitive viewers. Motion sensor lights shall be used in order to reduce the amount of constant light, especially during the late evening/early morning hours. Lighting fixtures shall be designed and implemented to provide illumination appropriate for the level of activity. The Project shall also be consistent with the lighting policies contained in SDSU's Physical Master Plan (SDSU Physical Master Plan, Phase I, pp. 157–160).
- 3. The Project is required to demonstrate compliance with SDSU's Physical Master Plan to ensure structures will not contain large expanses of reflective glass or reflective metal surfaces that would cause undue glare to passing mobile viewers and/or present a visual hazard to adjacent land uses.

# 7.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPACTS AFTER MITIGATION

# Construction

Shielding of lighting would be required to avoid impacts to motorists and residences located adjacent to construction activities. Mitigation shall be implemented so that lighting shall be arranged so that direct rays would not shine on or produce glare for adjacent street traffic and residential uses. This would ensure that nighttime lighting during construction would not impact mobile viewers or residences.

# Operation

The project components would be consistent with recent redevelopment and would result in the redevelopment of an existing blighted area to a coordinated mixed-use neighborhood that proposes increased economic activity, additional residences, and enhanced outdoor spaces. In addition, the development would utilize a modern architectural theme accented by elements of the Mission Revival architecture style present in the central campus core, to help tie into the visual character envisioned in the college area. Although the Project would include the redevelopment of existing structures that would alter the existing condition, this change would be positive, as it would reduce blighted conditions. Therefore the Proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project site and its surroundings. Given the increased density of both retail and housing uses in the Project area, the amount of lighting and glare would increase compared to the existing condition. Potential impacts from lighting would be reduced to a level below significance with implementation of Mitigation Measure 2, because the lighting would be shielded and oriented downward and its use would be limited only to times when needed (through the use of motion detectors) to ensure that potential changes in nighttime views would not be significant. Potential impacts related to reflectivity or glare would be reduced to a level below significance with implementation of Mitigation Measure 3, by ensuring that the project design does not include large expanses of reflective glass or reflective metal surfaces.

# 8.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

This report was prepared by the following Dudek staff members:

Sarah Lozano, Project Manager David Hochart, Environmental Planner Brian Grover, Environmental Planner Mark McGinnis, GIS Lesley Terry, GIS Paul Caligiuri, Visual Simulations Matthew Caselli, Technical Editor Julie Corrales, Word Processor.
## 9.0 **REFERENCES**

- 14 CCR 15000 et seq. Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act.
- Caltrans (California Department of Transportation). 2006. California Scenic Highway System. Accessed May 6, 2009, at: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/cahisys.htm.
- Digital Globe. 2008. 1 Foot True Color DOQQ (Digital Ortho Quarter Quad). Accessed at: www.digitalglobe.com

Dudek. 2009.

San Diego, City of. 1989. College Area Community Plan. Last amended August 5, 2002.

- San Diego, City of. 1993. College Community Redevelopment Plan Master Project Plan. Approved October 12. Resolution No. R-282801.
- San Diego, City of. 1997. College Community Redevelopment Project Core Sub-Area Design Manual. Adopted August 12. Resolution No. R-289099.

SANGIS. 2008.

- SDSU (San Diego State University). 1997. Physical Master Plan, Phase 1.
- Wallace, Roberts & Todd, LLC. 2009. Mixed Use Feasibility Study for San Diego State University Plaza Linda Verde.

DUDEK

## INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

DUDEK

62

# **APPENDIX A** SDSU Lighting Policy

## SECTION 5 · DRAFT DESIGN GUIDELINES

- Lighting is necessary in all areas where steps, drop-offs or other trip hazards are found.
- Lighting should be used to help direct vehicular and pedestrian traffic to major entrances and parking lots. Light levels should be increased at destination entrances. Entrance portals to walkways should be illuminated to help pedestrians find their way.
- Differing levels of lighting footcandles should be used to emphasize streets and intersections. The entry gateways and pedestrian portals should have lighting levels of approximately 2.0 foot- candles. High levels of lighting (1.0-1.75 foot-candles) are necessary in areas where pedestrians and vehicles intermix and in major parking lots. Moderate levels of lighting (.5 foot-candle) are encouraged along pedestrian walkways and minor parking lots. Lower levels of lighting (.2 foot-candles) are suggested for any area that is close to a residential unit.
- Shielded lighting and cut-off type box lighting should be encouraged in all areas where lighting spill over into residential areas is anticipated.
- Building mounted lighting will be used to set off building entrances. A wall wash of light is allowed if the light is positioned for down lighting instead of up lighting.
- Flush wall lights along steps or walkways lined with walls/ planters are encouraged.
- Landmark lighting is encouraged to help orient the night-time user to major nodes and landmarks found on the campus. Lighting of entry monuments and landscaping should also encouraged.
- Site furnishings such as bus shelters and special outdoor seating areas should utilize lighting to increase safety.

160

nized steel chain link with a black or color coated surface. Metal slats in a color to match the fence may be used for total screening. Heights should not extend above eight feet.

Care must be given to control visual penetration into certain security areas while at the same time providing some visual access to increase security. A solid wall should not be allowed to become an element that people can hide behind. Short solid walls (below 3 feet) should be used in combination with metal extensions and fencing. The judicious placement of openings with integrated metal work will help provide the required visual penetration while still physically limiting access and shielding most areas from uncontrolled public view.

#### Lighting

The primary goal of SDSU's lighting policy is to achieve safety and security on all walkways and parking areas. The way that lighting affects individuals varies from person to person, but by following the recommendations and principals of IES, designers can create pleasing, adequately lighted environments. IES publishes specific values for recommended light levels expressed in footcandles (FC) and average-to-minimum uniformity ratios. These standards are applied to four distinct classes of walkways/sidewalks to meet IES requisites for pedestrian identification at a distance or special pedestrian security. SDSU also applies IES standards for parking lots based on the classification of the University as an Educational Facility with a medium activity level, due to the large number of vehicles present at night.

SDSU lighting policy voluntarily foliows the adopted ordinances of the City of San Diego for any outdoor lighting upgrade. The impetus for establishing this directive lies in the University's interest in reducing light pollution because it effects astronomical research, particularly at the Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories. Attention to light source and fixture selection will address this issue. Inadequately lighted parking lots will be required to upgrade by using 180 watt low pressure sodium (LPS) light sources. However, the nature of LPS light sources precludes the practicality of their use for campus walkways and outdoor assembly areas. Therefore it is

recommended that 100 watt high pressure sodium (HPS) light sources be installed on upgraded walkways, stairs, ramps and plazas used for outdoor performances.

### Priority Status

Every parking lot and walkway that has been assessed as being below the IES standards has been assigned a priority status of either Level 1 or Level 2, as deemed by both objective and subjective criteria. When the majority of an area (50%+) fails to meet IES standards, it is assigned Level 1 status. If less than 50% of an area fails to meet standards, it is assigned Level 2 status. Subjective criteria that affect priority status are intensity of use and pedestrian safety. In addition, an annual night walk helps to establish priorities. This campus-wide evaluation includes participation from students, faculty, staff and consultants. From this evaluation, priorities can be established and implemented as funding becomes available.

The design concept for lighting is to provide consistency in the selection of light sources, light fixtures, poles and materials. Lighting provides the opportunity to improve the visual quality of an installation by utilizing fixtures that relate to the building materials found in the adjacent architecture. Providing too many different types of light poles and fixtures in a given area tends to look cluttered and chaotic.

# General criteria that should apply to all lighting includes:

- High pressure sodium or metal halide fixtures should be used where public safety or aesthetic issues are important. Given that the city has cleared the way for switching from low pressure sodium to high pressure sodium south of I-8, the original Mt. Palomar night sky requirement may not be valid based on the location of the campus.
- Lighting must meet the minimum light distribution requirements necessary to provide a safe night-time environment and to provide for security monitoring.