
4. AESTHETICS (VISUAL FACTORS)

This SEIR chapter describes the aesthetic implications of the proposed Stanford Outpatient Center, focusing on associated changes in the 1996 Midpoint Technology Park EIR project that may result in significant new or substantially changed visual impacts or mitigation needs.

4.1 SETTING

4.1.1 Project Site Visual Characteristics

As illustrated on Figure 3.3, the 11.3-acre project modification site, at the northeast corner of the 48.4-acre Midpoint Technology Park site, is generally flat. The four existing office buildings include two 3-story structures--420 and 450 Broadway--fronting on Broadway, and two adjacent 4-story structures--430 and 440 Broadway--located towards center of the site. The four on-site buildings are visually linked by similar architectural design characteristics and intervening pedestrian and landscaping elements (visually unifying pedestrian features, decorative paving, integrated planting, etc.).

The architectural design of the four buildings is consistent, comprised of concrete frame construction clad with a glass and articulated metal panel "curtain wall" system; the separation between each floor is delineated with exposed concrete spandrels painted to match the white mullions and rooftop equipment screens. The buildings are capped by a metal panel clad parapet incorporating the same articulated panel module, and concealing existing rooftop mechanical equipment. Existing landscaping includes deciduous, broad-leaved street trees lining the Broadway frontage, and similar tree species accenting the outside periphery of the four buildings.

Adjacent parcels to the west and on the opposite side of Broadway contain other Midpoint Technology Park one- and two-story buildings and associated similar surface parking provisions and landscaping treatments.

The adjacent parcel to the east contains the seven-story Broadway Towers apartment building (previously the Mariposa Apartments) fronting on Second Avenue between Broadway and Highway 101. The "podium" style, R-5 (Multi-family High-Density) apartment structure includes six stories of residential apartments atop a one-story, sub-grade parking level.

4.1.2 Surrounding Vantage Points

(a) Broadway Towers Apartments. The eastern façade of the easternmost project structure at 420 Broadway is approximately 225 feet from the western façade of the adjacent Broadway Towers apartment building. The seven-story apartment structure is oriented on a north-south axis, parallel to the east property line of the project site; therefore approximately half of the Broadway Towers residential units have views directly towards or over the 11.3-acre project site--i.e., the four existing three- and four-story project structures and surface parking area.

(b) U.S. Highway 101. U.S. Highway 101 (the Bayshore Freeway) forms the north boundary of the 48.4-acre Midpoint Technology Park campus, including the 11.3-acre project site. The highway provides direct views of the rear, northern edge of the Midpoint campus, including the rear elevations of the various three- and four-story building clusters and intervening surface parking areas which comprise the north half of the campus between Broadway and the freeway. As illustrated on Figure 3.2 (Project Vicinity--Aerial Photograph), there are a total of four Midpoint Technology Park building clusters along the freeway edge; two of those four building clusters comprise the project site.

(c) Broadway. As illustrated on Figure 4.1 (Project Site--Aerial Photograph), Broadway functions as a central spine traversing the 48.4-acre Midpoint Technology campus, providing primary vehicular access to each campus component on each side of the route via a series of similar and visually unifying entrance/exit driveways along an approximately 3,000-foot segment of Broadway. This 3,000-foot segment of Broadway provides direct views into all components of the campus fronting along both sides of the route, including the 11.3-acre project site.

The 11.3-acre project site portion of the campus includes approximately 1,300 feet of frontage along the north side of Broadway. As illustrated on Figure 4.1 (Project Site--Aerial Photograph), the four project buildings--420 through 450 Broadway--are configured in a U-shaped array oriented towards the Broadway frontage, around a landscaped commons.

4.2 PERTINENT PLANS AND POLICIES

4.2.1 Redwood City General Plan

The Redwood City Strategic General Plan contains the following policy directly pertinent to consideration of the aesthetic impacts of the proposed project changes:

- *Residential neighborhoods should be protected from the encroachment of incompatible activities or land uses which may have a negative impact on the residential living environment.* (Land Use Policy L-1, page 6-5)

4.2.2 Other City-Adopted Policies

In addition, the Redwood City City Council adopted the following relevant policy on September 10, 2001:

- *It is the policy of the City of Redwood City that in the design of public and private projects, high priority be given to creating comfortable, enjoyable, and aesthetically pleasing public spaces.*

4.2.3 Zoning Ordinance

The proposed project changes include a request for City approval of a Planned Development (PD) Permit Amendment. Article 46 of the Redwood City Zoning Ordinance identifies objectives for Zoning Administrator and Planning Commission use in considering whether to approve PD Permits and Amendments. Section 46.1 includes the following two PD Permit objectives which relate to visual quality:

Figure 4.1. Project Site--Aerial Photograph.

- *to encourage the development of innovative projects which incorporate the highest quality architectural solutions, building materials, and landscaping concepts; and*
- *to promote the most functional and aesthetic relationships between building structures, signs, open space and parking areas in residential, commercial and industrial zoning districts.*

4.2.4 Redwood City Planning Division Urban Design Guidelines

The Redwood City Planning Division Urban Design Guidelines were drafted by the City primarily for application in Downtown Redwood City; however, the text of the Guidelines does not limit their application solely to Downtown. The following specific Guidelines are pertinent to consideration of the proposed project changes:

- *The bases of all buildings fronting on streets shall relate to the pedestrian scale by incorporating various amenities such as well-defined entrance areas, outdoor courtyards, public/private seating, and appropriate lighting conditions. The use of arcades, trellises, colonnades, landscaped pathways, judiciously located porches or porticos, and aesthetically designed entrance ways are also recommended for enhancing the streetscape.*
- *Parking facilities shall be less prominent than the principal structures which they serve, unless they are of exemplary architectural design quality.*
- *A sense of visual continuity with the adjacent structures, local streetscape, and general area shall be maintained.*

4.3 PREVIOUS EIR FINDINGS PERTINENT TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT CHANGES

The 1996 Final EIR for the Midpoint Technology Park (December 1996) set forth the following certified impact and mitigation findings which remain applicable to the proposed project changes and will serve to ensure that most of the visual effects of the proposed project changes will be less than significant (only those visual impact and mitigation findings pertinent to consideration of the proposed changes are listed):

Impact 6-2: Views from Highway 101 (Bayshore Fwy.). The proposed project will affect the views from the Bayshore Freeway as a result of the removal of many existing trees, and the construction of the new four-story parking structure [*subsequently replaced by an underground parking garage*] and the new three- [*420 and 450 Broadway; now constructed*] and four-story [*430 and 440 Broadway; now constructed*] buildings which will be visible from the freeway.

Certified Mitigation 6-2. All signage and landscaping/irrigation improvements shall be reviewed and approved by City.

Impact 6-3: Views [of Proposed Four-Story Parking Structure] from Apartment Building on Second Avenue. The most significant changes in the visual character of the project area will occur on the southeasterly portion of the project area. This portion of the project area is proposed to be developed with a four-story parking structure [*subsequently replaced by an*

underground parking garage], two four-story buildings [430 and 440 Broadway; now constructed], and two three-story buildings [420 and 450 Broadway; now constructed].

...those units located within that portion of the [adjacent existing seven-story] apartment building [facing or overlooking] the parking structure would have their northerly views interrupted and would look directly into the parking structure, or onto the roof of the structure.

Certified Mitigation 6-3. Move the westerly wing of the parking structure opposite the seven-story apartment building to the east, so that the end wall of the parking structure facing Broadway coincides with or does not extend beyond the end wall of the apartment building facing the Bayshore Freeway.

Impact 6-7: Night Lighting. Night lighting of the buildings, parking lots, parking structure, and walkways can [result in] a negative visual impact on...surrounding areas, especially... the adjacent apartment building and nearby residential neighborhoods...

Certified Mitigation 6-7. ...The developer shall submit [a] lighting plan for new construction, including the garage, for City review and approval.

Impact 6-8: Visual Division of Project Area by Broadway. Broadway visually and physically divides the [overall Midpoint Technology Park] campus into two separate elements, due to [the roadway's] width and the amount of traffic through the middle of the project area....[C]ertain design features can be installed to help to minimize this perceived division.

Certified Mitigation 6-8. The project architect shall submit a landscape and hardscape plan in order to visually connect the project across Broadway. The program could include elements of common landscape, paving, and signage, which will be the subject of review by [the] Architectural Review Committee.

Relevant to the proposed Stanford Outpatient Center, Certified Mitigation 6-8 was implemented as part of the previously approved Midpoint Technology Park project. Two crosswalks with textured color pavement and pedestrian lights were installed across Broadway, visually and functionally connecting both sides of the street with the courtyard in front of 420-450 Broadway (the proposed Outpatient Center buildings).

4.4 SUPPLEMENTAL IMPACT AND MITIGATION FINDINGS

4.4.1 Supplemental Analysis Scope

The scope of this supplemental visual impact analysis is limited to identification of the mitigating (beneficial) and additional adverse visual impacts of the proposed project changes (proposed architectural, signage, and landscaping modifications; and possible future parking structure).

4.4.2 Significance Criteria

Based on the significance criteria established in the 1996 Midpoint Technology Park EIR (section 6.3.1), a proposed project change would be considered to have a significant adverse visual (aesthetic) impact if it would:

- (a) Conflict with adopted environmental plans and goals of the community where it is located;
or
- (b) Have a substantial demonstrative negative aesthetic effect.

Based on the significance criteria established in Appendix G of the latest (2006) CEQA Guidelines, a proposed project change would also be considered to have a significant adverse visual (aesthetic) impact if it would:

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

4.4.3 Supplemental Impacts and Mitigations

Supplemental Impact 4-1: Rooftop Modification Impacts on Views from Adjacent Apartment Building. The rooftops of 420 and 430 Broadway, the closest project buildings to the adjacent Broadway Towers apartment building, are generally at "eye level" with the top (seventh) floor of the apartment building. The proposed project modifications include installation of additional and replacement rooftop mechanical equipment and associated rooftop screening additions atop 420 and 430 Broadway. Assuming that the height of the rooftop equipment screening would be equal to or greater than the finished height of the modified rooftop mechanical equipment, associated visual effects on the adjacent apartment building would be less-than-significant. Nevertheless, until the project rooftop mechanical equipment and associated screening heights are finalized and the adequacy of the specified screening heights in relationship to the finished mechanical equipment heights can be verified by the City's Architectural Review Committee (ARC) and Planning Commission during the required Planned Development (PD) Permit Amendment approval process, it is assumed that the proposed project rooftop modifications may have a **significant adverse impact** on top floor views from the adjacent apartment building (see criteria [a] and [e] in subsection 4.4.2, "Significance Criteria," above).

Explanation:

Figure 4.2 (Project Site--Aerial Photograph) shows the relationship of the existing project buildings to the existing adjacent Broadway Towers apartment building to the east. As shown in the photograph below, the rooftops of the two project buildings nearest to the adjacent apartment building--420 and 430 Broadway--are generally at "eye level" with the top floor of the apartment building. As also shown in the photograph, existing rooftop mechanical equipment atop the closest, northeast wing of 420 Broadway, and atop 430 Broadway, is

effectively concealed from view by the existing parapet screening; and, because the southwest wing of 420 Broadway has a lower existing parapet, existing rooftop mechanical equipment atop this wing is not fully concealed.



View towards project from adjacent apartment building. Closest, northeast wing of 420 Broadway is in center, southwest wing of 420 Broadway is on the left, and 430 Broadway is further away on the right. (Photo provided by applicant.)

The proposed project modifications include installation of additional and replacement rooftop mechanical equipment on these structures and associated rooftop screening additions atop the southwest wing of 420 Broadway--see item A-17 on Figure 3.6 (Proposed Modifications--Site Plan) and "East Elevation" on Figure 3.7 (Proposed Modifications--Elevations) in chapter 3 (Description of Project Changes) herein. The existing rooftop mechanical screen (parapet) on the northeast wing of 420 Broadway would not be modified--see item A-18 on Figure 3.6.

Assuming that the height of the existing rooftop equipment screening (A-18) and added rooftop equipment screening (A-17) on 420 Broadway would be equal to or greater than the finished height of the mechanical equipment, the effects of these modifications on views from the adjacent apartment building would be less-than-significant. Nevertheless, until project rooftop mechanical equipment and associated screening details are finalized and the adequacy of the specified screening heights in relationship to the finished mechanical equipment heights can be verified by the City's Architectural Review Committee (ARC) and Planning Commission during the required Planned Development (PD) Permit Amendment approval process, it is assumed that the project rooftop modifications may have a significant adverse impact on adjacent apartment building top floor views.

Supplemental Mitigation 4-1. To avoid adverse effects on views from the top floor of the adjacent apartment building, the height relationship between the proposed rooftop mechanical equipment modifications and associated equipment screening atop 420 and 430 Broadway shall, to the satisfaction of the ARC and Planning Commission as established through the City's normal design review process for the required PD Permit Amendment, be sufficient to block views of the modified equipment. Implementation of this measure would reduce this potential visual impact to a ***less-than-significant level***.

Parking Structure Visual Impacts on Adjacent Apartment Building. Chapter 12 (Transportation) of this SEIR includes under *Supplemental Mitigation 12-10*, addressing an identified potential future parking capacity deficiency, possible construction of parking decks at one or more of three possible on-site locations, if and when the *parking monitoring program* called for under the same mitigation indicates a significant parking shortfall. This possible parking deck construction action would have a ***less-than-significant visual impact*** for the following reasons:

The 1996 Midpoint Technology Park EIR under "*Impact 6-3: Views from Apartment Building on Second Avenue*," identified a potentially significant adverse visual impact associated with "the proposed four-story parking structure"... "on the southeasterly [*northeasterly*] portion of the project area" on views from "those units located within that portion of the [*adjacent existing seven-story*] apartment building [*facing or overlooking*] the parking structure." The parking structure anticipated under this 1996 EIR impact finding was proposed to be located at the northeast corner of the project site near the adjacent Broadway Towers apartment building.

To mitigate this identified potential visual impact, the 1996 EIR under Certified Mitigation 6-3 called for locating "the end wall of the parking structure facing Broadway" so that it "coincides with or does not extend beyond the end [*north*] wall of the apartment building," indicating that this modification would reduce the impact of the parking structure on views from the adjacent apartment building to a less-than-significant level.

Chapter 12 (Transportation) of this SEIR includes under *Supplemental Mitigation 12-10*, as mitigation for the potential future parking capacity impacts of the proposed outpatient clinic use, the possible construction of "reduced-height parking decks (rather than a four-story parking structure)" at one or more of three possible on-site locations in the event that additional parking is needed. The proposed three possible on-site parking deck locations, and an associated cross-section, are illustrated on Figures 12.11 and 12.12, respectively, in chapter 12 herein.

The possible future reduced-height parking decks proposed under *Supplemental Mitigation 12-10* would have less visual impact than the "mitigated" four-story parking structure anticipated in the 1996 EIR--i.e., would effectively mitigate 1996 EIR Impact 6-3. The visual impact of the reduced-height parking deck(s) suggested under *Supplemental Mitigation 12-10* herein on views from the adjacent apartment building would therefore be ***less-than-significant***.

Supplemental Mitigation. No significant additional impact has been identified; no supplemental mitigation is required.

Other Project Modification Visual Impacts on Views from Adjacent Apartment Building.

All other proposed project changes would fall within the Midpoint Technology Park-related "changes in the visual character of the project area" anticipated under Impact 6-3 in the 1996 EIR, and would not add to or worsen the impacts anticipated under Impact 6-3 on views from the adjacent Broadway Towers apartment building.

The proposed landscaping modifications (see Figure 3.6), including the added tree canopy in the north parking area planting triangle and planting median along the east edge of 420 Broadway, and at the eastern entrance driveway on Broadway, would improve the quality of foreground views from the affected adjacent apartment units.

The proposed new building sign on the east-facing parapet of 430 Broadway (A-3), which would be visible from adjacent (northwest-facing) Broadway Towers apartment units, would be subject to City design review and approval pursuant to the Redwood City Sign Ordinance, and would fall within and not add to the project impacts on views from the adjacent apartment building anticipated in the 1996 EIR.

The proposed new lobby structure at the east entrance between 420 and 430 Broadway (A-6), the top of the proposed new dining terrace trellis on the south side of 440 Broadway (A-7), and the new enclosed walkway connection between 430 and 440 Broadway, would also be visible from the adjacent upper floor, northwest-facing apartment units. These new elements would be subject to City Planned Development Permit Amendment review and approval, pursuant to Article 46 (Planned Development Permits) of the Redwood City Zoning Ordinance, would add visual interest, and would fall within and not add to the project impacts on views from the adjacent apartment building anticipated in the 1996 EIR.

Supplemental Mitigation: No significant additional adverse impact has been identified; no supplemental mitigation is required.

Views of Project Modifications from Broadway and U.S. 101. The proposed project changes visible from Broadway and U.S. 101, including the added landscaping, added parapet panels (rooftop mechanical equipment screening), and new parapet signage, would have generally beneficial impacts on views of the project site from Broadway and U.S. 101, adding visual interest and enhancing the visual character of the complex. The proposed added parapet panels would effectively screen views of the proposed additional rooftop mechanical equipment from Broadway and U.S. 101. The proposed new primary and secondary "monument" signage along Broadway at the Outpatient Center entrance driveways, interior "wayfinding" signage, and signage at the various building entry points, would be moderately sized with low signage heights (see Figures 3.9 and 3.10). The visual effects of these proposed project modifications would fall within, and would not add to or worsen, the project impacts on views from Highway 101 and Broadway already identified in the 1996 EIR under Impact 6-2: Views from Highway 101 (Bayshore Freeway) and Impact 6-4: Views from [Broadway at] Second Avenue, and would be fully mitigated through implementation of Certified Mitigation 6-2 and Certified Mitigation 6-4.

Supplemental Mitigation: No significant additional adverse impact has been identified; no supplemental mitigation is required.

