4.1 AESTHETICS

This section analyzes and describes existing aesthetic and visual resources of the project area, such as light and glare generation and compatibility issues with the visual characteristics of surrounding land uses. In particular, descriptions of existing visual characteristics, both on-site and in the vicinity of the project site, are presented. Potential impacts to aesthetic and visual resources resulting from the development of the proposed project were based on analyses of photographs and site reconnaissance, and on various documents including the Town of Yucca Valley Comprehensive General Plan, the Town of Yucca Valley Commercial Design Guidelines, and Yucca Valley ordinances.

4.1.1 Existing Setting

The Town of Yucca Valley is located within the Morongo Basin, which is situated between the Little San Bernardino Mountains and the Sawtooth Mountains. Easily seen from the Town, these two mountain ranges provide a dramatic and dominant scenic vista. The surrounding mountain ranges create rocky terrain and extreme changes in elevation; topographic elevations range from approximately 3,100 feet in the center of Town to approximately 4,700 feet in the mountainous terrain surrounding the Town. Because of the elevation differences in the Yucca Valley area, the Town offers substantial views of surrounding areas in virtually every direction. Views include Burnt Mountain and South Park Peak to the south, the Little San Bernardino Mountains to the south and southeast, the San Bernardino Mountains and Sawtooth Range to the west, the Alter’s Hill area to the north, and the Bartlett Mountains to the east.

The project site is generally flat, with northeasterly-trending slopes of less than 4 percent and approximate elevations from 3,190 to 3,230 feet above sea level. The predominant vegetation on the site is Joshua tree woodland containing Joshua tree, creosote bush, California joint fir, common Mediterranean schismus, redstem stork’s bill, and cheat grass. The site contains moderately disturbed areas from unauthorized bike activities, trash dumping, and an abandoned segment of asphalt road. A non-jurisdictional ephemeral stream is located in the southeast quarter of the project site (see Section 4.4, Biological Resources). There are no standing bodies of water present in the project vicinity.

Joshua Tree National Park, which contains 794,000 acres of desert preserve, is near the Town’s southern border. The Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan site is approximately four miles from the Joshua Tree National Park boundary.

The project site is currently undeveloped. Land immediately to the south, and east of the proposed project site is currently vacant. Scattered, low-density residential uses are located farther north, and southwesterly of the project site. Office/administrative uses are located to the west of the project, across Avalon Avenue. The proposed project is consistent with the current General Commercial zoning and would include a Specific Plan overlay (see Section 4.9, Land Use and Planning, for more information on land use and zoning).

1 Town of Yucca Valley Comprehensive General Plan, prepared by the Town of Yucca Valley Community Development Department, December 14, 1995.
2 Town of Yucca Valley Commercial Design Guidelines, prepared by the Community Development Department, May 16, 2001.
4.1.2 Existing Policies and Regulations

Existing policies and regulations for aesthetics includes those found in the Town of Yucca Valley Comprehensive General Plan, the Town of Yucca Valley Commercial Design Guidelines, and the Town of Yucca Valley Ordinances 88, 90, 140, and 156.

Town of Yucca Valley Comprehensive General Plan Policies

The Scenic Highways Element, Community Design Element, Land Use Element, and Biological Resources Element of the General Plan define goals and policies related to the preservation of aesthetic resources in the Town. The specific policies of these elements that are relevant to the proposed project are listed here.

Scenic Highways Element. Once designated as a scenic highway within the General Plan, development occurring along such a designated road would be required to adhere to requirements identified for scenic highways by the Town. The following policies describe guiding principle for Yucca Valley state scenic highways, one of which is SR-62.

Policy 1  State eligible State Routes 62 and 247, as well as Joshua Lane and Pioneertown Road, are hereafter designated as Scenic Roadways in the Yucca Valley General Plan.

Program 1.A.  Map those scenic corridors that are designed for scenic roadways and establish development guidelines to protect and enhance scenic values along those roadways.

Policy 2  Within fiscal and practical limits, enforce the minimum requirements for State Scenic Highways and land use/design guidelines for Town designated scenic roadways.

Program 2.A  Establish guidelines and design criteria for development along scenic highways to meet the goal of scenic corridor protection for state and locally designated roadways.

Program 2.B  Architectural review within scenic corridors shall include review of building massing and design, heights and setbacks and exterior colors and materials which shall remain compatible with the natural environments. The use of natural materials and earth

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1 Town of Yucca Valley, Ordinance No. 88, An Ordinance of the Town Council of the Town of Yucca Valley, California, Amending Title 8, Division 4, Chapter 3, Section 84.0350 (General Commercial) of the County of San Bernardino Development Code As Adopted by the Town of Yucca Valley Municipal Code Regarding Permitted Land Uses in the General Commercial District, approved and adopted by the Town Council, March 5, 1988.


3 Town of Yucca Valley, Ordinance No. 140, An Ordinance of the Town Council of the Town of Yucca Valley, California, Amending Title 8, Division 9 of the County of San Bernardino Code as Adopted by the Town of Yucca Valley Relating to Plant Protection and Management (DCA-06-01), approved and adopted by the Town Council, June 5, 2003.

4 Town of Yucca Valley, Ordinance No. 156, An Ordinance of the Town Council of the Town of Yucca Valley, California, Amending Title 8, Division 7, Chapter 7 of the San Bernardino County Code as Adopted and Amended by the Town of Yucca Valley Relating to Sign Regulations (DCA-03-03), approved and adopted by the Town Council, September 7, 2004.
stones shall be encouraged with materials such as reflective surfaces discouraged within the zone.

**Policy 4**  
Outdoor operations or storage associated with commercial or industrial development within critical viewsheds shall be restricted and/or made compatible with scenic values.

**Program 4.A**  
Review development proposals along or within the viewshed of scenic highways to preclude development with outside storage and/or to assure operations are adequately screened or restricted to enclosed building to the greatest extent practical.

**Community Design Element.** As stated in the *Town of Yucca Valley Comprehensive General Plan* (page III-84), the Community Design Element policies can be implemented through several mechanisms, including other Elements of the General Plan, the Town Development Code, and through Specific Plans for project areas. These policies guide development within the Town of Yucca Valley. Policies 1, 2, and 12 apply to the proposed project.

**Policy 1**  
Strive to achieve and maintain community design standards consistent with its character as a low density, rural residential community that also provides regional commercial and professional services.

**Policy 2**  
Establish and maintain appropriate community standards setting architectural and design parameters for future development, which protect the community’s scenic viewsheds, provide community cohesion, and enhance the image of Yucca Valley as a quality rural community.

**Policy 12**  
Take every reasonable measure to preserve the value of the community’s night sky, establishing maximum lighting levels and permitting fixtures appropriate for the need, use, security, safety, and aesthetics.

**Land Use Element (Commercial Goals, Policies and Programs).** Policy 2 of the Land Use Element refers to design guidelines.

**Policy 2**  
Development standards for commercial land uses shall include setbacks, pad elevations, mass and height standards, and other design guidelines which enhance the character and attractiveness of the Town’s commercial districts.

**Biological Resources Element.** The Biological Resources Element of the General Plan defines goals and policies related to the preservation of biological resources in the Town. The specific policies of the Biological Resources Element that are relevant to the potential aesthetic impacts of the proposed project are Policies 6 and 8.

**Policy 6**  
To the greatest extent practical, the Town shall require developers to salvage native Joshua trees and shrubs for incorporation into project landscaping or transplant trees to other sites.
Developers and others required to submit landscape plans to the Town for approval shall be required to use native and approved, non-native, drought-tolerant plant species which provide or enhance wildlife habitat and serve to extend the local desert environment into the urban design of the Town.

Town of Yucca Valley Commercial Design Guidelines

The *Town of Yucca Valley Commercial Design Guidelines* address elements of project design, including desirable elements of the commercial project design, as well as undesirable elements that should be avoided. The most desirable qualities and design elements for commercial projects include:

- Cohesiveness of scale and overall character with adjacent structures and sites;
- Multi-planed, pitched roofs;
- Significant wall articulation (e.g., canopies, insets, wing walls, and trellises);
- Richness of surface and texture;
- Roof overhangs, arcades;
- Regular or traditional window placement and rhythm; and
- Color that complements the natural desert setting.

Undesirable elements that should be minimized or avoided, according to the *Town of Yucca Valley Commercial Design Guidelines*, include the following:

- Square, “boxlike” structures;
- Large blank, unarticulated wall surfaces;
- Highly reflective surfaces;
- Metal siding on the main façade;
- Gray concrete precision block walls;
- Plastic siding; and
- Primary, bright, or fluorescent colors.

The focus of the Commercial Design Guidelines is to include common architectural design elements that best reflect the Town’s “desert southwestern” character; however, within this context the Commercial Design Guidelines state (page 1) that they are “intended to be used as guidelines and allow flexibility and to promote creativity.”

Town of Yucca Valley Ordinance 88

Ordinance 88 of the Town of Yucca Valley lists permitted land uses in the General Commercial district and establishes development standards. According to Section 84.0350 of Ordinance 88, the permitted land uses include professional services and retail trade/personal services, which aptly describe the uses proposed for the project. The development standards for General Commercial are shown in Table 4.1.A.
Table 4.1.A – General Commercial District Zoning Development Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum structure heights</td>
<td>40 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Lot Size(^1)</td>
<td>5 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Lot Coverage</td>
<td>60 percent building coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Lot Dimensions</td>
<td>1 to 3 width to depth ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Lot Dimensions</td>
<td>120 by 120 feet (width to depth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front Yard Setback</td>
<td>15 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side Yard Setbacks(^2)</td>
<td>10 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rear Yard Setbacks(^3)</td>
<td>10 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Side Yard Setbacks</td>
<td>15 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Floor Area Ratio</td>
<td>1.20 floor area to lot area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum District Size</td>
<td>5 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Town of Yucca Valley Ordinance 88.
Notes: 
\(^1\) Minimum lot size can be less than five acres if the subdivision application is filed concurrently with a Site Plan Review, Planned Development, or Conditional Use Permit application.
\(^2\) Only one side yard setback is required to be provided if deemed necessary for emergency access. If the adjacent property is not designated commercial or industrial, a side yard setback shall be required along that side of the property.
\(^3\) A rear yard setback is required only when the adjacent property is not designated commercial or industrial.

The Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan (Specific Plan) will implement the Town of Yucca Valley Development Code, but would also provide additional zoning, development standards and guidelines that are customized to achieve the specific vision for the project area. The Town’s development standards are utilized for certain aspects of the project, such as parking, while the Specific Plan provides other standards that are tailored to the proposed project.

Related and/or subsequent approvals or revisions must be consistent with both the guidelines of the Specific Plan and the Town’s Development Code. However, when development regulations in the Specific Plan differ from those established in the Town Code, the development regulation contained within the Specific Plan shall take priority over the development regulations contained in the Town Code. Where the Specific Plan is silent on a particular development regulation, Town Code development regulations shall apply to the project.

**Town of Yucca Valley Ordinance 90**

The Town of Yucca Valley Ordinance 90 establishes regulations and standards for outdoor lighting and night sky protection. The objectives of Ordinance 90 are to:

- Substantially reduce light pollution, which can be generated from commercial lighting fixtures and devices;
- Minimize light pollution, which has a detrimental effect on the environment and the enjoyment of the night sky;
- Reduce and minimize lighting practices, which cause unnecessary illumination of adjacent properties; and
- Implement the *Yucca Valley Comprehensive General Plan*, Community Design Element, Policy 12, Program 12.A and Program 12.B [Policy 12 is listed with the Community Design Element above, but Program 12.A and Program 12.B are not, as they do not apply to this project. 12A describes the implementation of a Town lighting standard ordinance; 12B is a lighting retirement program for existing non-conforming lighting and fixtures].

Ordinance 90, Section 8.70.030 *Outdoor Lighting Fixtures*, (b)(2)(A) presents the Town of Yucca Valley lighting policy for commercial land use districts:

> *Any new construction located in any commercial or industrial land use district, as identified on the Yucca Valley Zoning Map, and which properties are used for commercial and industrial purposes, unless exempt shall be fully shielded\(^1\) or recessed in such a manner as to preclude adverse impacts to adjacent property as a result of light trespass,\(^2\) or to any member of the public who may be traveling on adjacent roadways or right-of-way.*

Some outdoor light fixtures\(^3\) are exempt from the shielding requirements. Section 8.70.040 of Ordinance 90 lists outdoor lighting fixtures that are exempt from the requirements of Chapter 8.70.030, some of which (those that are associated with commercial uses) are included here:

- Fixtures producing light directly by the combustion of fossil fuels, such as kerosene lantern or gas lamps;
- All neon outdoor lighting fixtures;
- Emergency lighting operated by a public utility or agency during the course of repairing or replacing damaged facilities;
- Emergency lighting and fixtures necessary to conduct rescue operations, provide emergency medical treatment or address any other emergency situations;
- Internally illuminated signs;
- Holiday lighting fixture displays;
- Architectural lighting\(^4\) (whether it is freestanding or attached to a building), which does not exceed an intensity of 40 watts;

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\(^1\) Fully shielded, according to Ordinance 90, means any outdoor lighting fixtures shielded or constructed so that light rays are only emitted by the installed fixtures at angles below a horizontal plane passing through the lowest point of the light source and so not to direct light or light trespass onto adjacent property.

\(^2\) Light trespass, according to Ordinance 90, means nuisance glare from any lighting onto neighboring property that interferes with viewing of night sky or eliminates the ability to have darkness on the adjacent property or shines into neighboring windows and all or any areas on neighboring properties or structures. Quantitative measurement of light trespass shall be with a standard yard stick (3 ft × 1.5 in.). The yard stick shall be placed at the building setback line in the complainant’s yard. The yard stick shall be in contact with the ground and in a vertical position. The enforcement personnel shall then determine if a shadow is cast by the light source. The light source, yard stick, and shadow must be in alignment. Measurements shall not be taken when there is a moon in the night sky.

\(^3\) Fixture means the assembly that holds the lamp and may include an assembly housing, a mounting bracket or pole socket, lamp holder, ballast, a reflector or mirror and a refractor or lens.

\(^4\) Architectural lighting is lighting that is either directed with the intent of highlighting an architectural feature or a light fixture which is architecturally ornamental in nature or purpose (Ordinance 90, Section 8.70.020).
• Pedestrian lighting,\(^1\) which does not have an intensity greater than 40 watts; and
• For a properly displayed United States flag, vertical lighting that does not exceed an intensity of 140 watts.

**Town of Yucca Valley Ordinance 140**

The project site contains Joshua Trees, which are considered to be a scenic resource. Ordinance 140 states that no existing regulated native plant shall be disturbed, moved (transplanted or otherwise), removed, or destroyed unless it is first reviewed and approved by the Town of Yucca Valley via a Native Plant Permit. It is the intent and desire of the Town to preserve and protect all Joshua Trees and Yuccas; however, according to Ordinance 140, this “intent and desire shall be balanced against the community’s need for growth and the development rights of individual property owners.”

The following regulated desert native plants, or any part thereof except the fruit, shall not be removed except under a permit issued by the Town of Yucca Valley (Ordinance 140):

- All mesquites with stems two inches or greater in diameter or six feet or greater in height
- All Joshua Trees
- Piñon Pine
- All species of yuccas (commonly found in Yucca Valley: Mohave Yucca and Our Lord’s Candle)
- Palo Verde
- Creosote Rings, ten feet or greater in diameter
- California juniper
- Desert Willow

It is acknowledged in Ordinance 140 that “community development may be more appropriately served if some existing Joshua Trees and Yuccas are allowed to be relocated;” thus, they may be transplanted to another location on the same property or may be made available for adoption through the Town’s Joshua Tree Preservation and Adoption Program.

A Joshua Tree that conforms to the following shall be preserved in place unless its removal, transplantation, or destruction is approved as prescribed within Ordinance 140:

- A Joshua Tree that is known, by historic record, including pictures or written description, to be at least forty years old;
- A Joshua Tree which has a width of at least fifteen feet as measured from the farthest point of outstretched branches (measured parallel to the ground);
- A Joshua Tree which is at least fifteen feet in height as measured from the base of the trunk to the highest point of the Tree; and/or
- A Joshua Tree that has a trunk measuring at least twelve inches in diameter as measured four feet from the ground.

\(^1\) Pedestrian lighting fixtures are freestanding lighting fixtures not exceeding a height of 36 inches from ground grade level (Ordinance 90, Section 8.70.020).
4.1 AESTHETICS

Town of Yucca Valley Ordinance 156

Relevant to the proposed project are Specific Plan sign regulations (Section 87.07128 of Ordinance 156). It states that Sign Programs for special or unique uses as a part of a Specific Plan may be approved containing standards other than provided in the sign regulations of Ordinance 156 except for the provisions of Section 87.07100 Sign Program. In describing a Sign Program, Section 87.07100 states that this type of program would be “developed for all new commercial, office, and industrial centers. The purpose of the program is to integrate signs with building and landscaping design to encourage a unified architectural statement.”

The following guidelines are encouraged in Section 87.07100 for developing a Sign Program:

- A theme, styles, types, color or placement of signs that will unify and identify the center and integrate the signs with the building design should be provided. Consideration should be given to the different types of tenants (e.g., major and minor) and placement locations consistent with the architectural design;

- Sign color should complement the building color. In general, the number of primary colors on any sign shall be limited to no more than two with secondary colors used for accent or shadow detail. Variations in color may be used as long as the remaining components of the program remain consistent with the overall program;

- The same type of cabinet1 supports or method of mounting for signs of the same type shall be used;

- The same type of construction material for same components, such as monument sign bases, panels, cabinets, and supports shall be used; and

- Consideration should be provided for logos or trademarks.

In Sections 87.07110(E)(1)(A) and (B) of Ordinance 156, it states that to preserve the night sky, off-white shades should be used for sign background color in lieu of pure white, and the use of dark background coloring and lighter shades for lettering should be used.

As stated in Ordinance 156, The Town of Yucca Valley has the authority to approve, conditionally approve, or deny a Sign Program based on the findings that the proposed sign program is in compliance with the purpose of Section 87.07100.

4.1.3 Thresholds of Significance

The following thresholds of significance regarding potential impacts to aesthetic resources are based on CEQA Guidelines (2005). The proposed project would result in a significant aesthetic impact if it would result in any of the following:

- A substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;

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1 According to Ordinance 156, a cabinet (when referring to a sign) is a three-dimensional structure which includes a frame, borders, and sign face panel and may include internal lighting upon which the sign letters and logos are placed or etched, and is architecturally integrated with the building (Ordinance 156).
• Substantial damage to scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway;

• Substantial degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; and/or

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

4.1.4 Impacts and Mitigation

Less Than Significant Impacts

The following impacts were determined to be less than significant. In each of the following issues, either no impact or a less than significant impact would occur (and, therefore, no mitigation would be required) or adherence to established regulations, standards, and policies would reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level.

Scenic Vistas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threshold</th>
<th>Would the proposed project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Outside of the immediate project site are the Little San Bernardino Mountains and the Sawtooth Mountains, two mountain ranges that provide a scenic vista from the site. Within the Town of Yucca Valley, the change in elevations is 1,600 feet (3,100 feet to 4,700 feet). This variance in elevation allows regional scenic vistas of the surrounding mountain ranges within the Town of Yucca Valley. In contrast, the topography of the project site and the immediately surrounding area is, for the most part, flat; the difference between the highest and lowest points is 40 feet (3,190 feet to 3,230 feet). Joshua Trees, which are a nearby scenic resource, are discussed later in this section.

There would be only one-story buildings within the Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan. The tallest building height would be 35 feet, which is less than the 40 feet allowed by the Town Development Code. Because of the relatively flat characteristics of the project site in relation to the elevation of the surrounding vistas and the substantial scale of the mountains surrounding the Town, development of the proposed single-story supercenter would not significantly block views of this regional scenic vista.

Visual simulations of the proposed project are shown in Figures 4.1.1, 4.1.2, and 4.1.3, providing views looking south, east, and southeast toward the proposed project. The visual simulation figures represent the vision of how the proposed project would appear in relation to its surroundings. Although the proposed project would partially block views of vicinity hillsides and ridges from vantage points near the project’s roadway frontages, vistas would not be completely blocked from viewpoints off the project site and adjacent roads. Because the Specific Plan, the Town of Yucca Valley’s General Plan development guidelines, and the Development Code are designed to preserve scenic vistas and natural view corridors, compliance with the proposed Specific Plan development standards and applicable existing regulations would ensure that the proposed project would not result with significant impact upon scenic vistas.
In Figure 4.1.1, is a view looking south from an off site location. This figure exhibits the modifications that the proposed project would have on the scenic vistas of the little San Bernardino Mountains. As displayed, the ridgeline of the mountains remains visible through the roofline variations proposed within the project’s architecture. Figure 4.1.2, is a view looking northeast where the Sawtooth hills are visible in the far left corner. The development of the proposed project, as demonstrated in the figure would modifying existing views of scenic vistas as seen within the project vicinity, however, existing scenic vistas observed off site would remain apparent. Adoption of the Town of Yucca Valley’s General Plan development guidelines and ordinances would limit the height of the proposed project to 40 feet, therefore ensuring that views of the hillsides are visible from adjacent locations. Figure 4.1.3, a view looking southeast; the Little San Bernardino Mountains are visible in the background. This figure demonstrates that some of the roadways surrounding the proposed project are at a higher elevation than the pad site, signifying that the view of travelers on nearby roads is not blocked as they pass by the site of the proposed project.

Existing scenic vistas of the Little San Bernardino and the Sawtooth Mountains as observed on the project vicinity would be modified with the development of the proposed project, as seen in Figures 4.1.1 through 4.1.3. The placement of the structures would limit visibility as seen from the parking lot areas and building entrances. Surrounding land uses such as the residential uses to the north and southwest would also experience modifications to scenic vistas but not to a degree of significance. The proposed project would be designed and built with consideration for architectural and design components in a desert environment in accordance with the proposed Specific Plan development standards and applicable existing General Plan development guidelines and Development Code regulations. Through implementation of the proposed and applicable existing regulations, the project would not create an adverse view. Because vistas of the mountains surrounding the project site would not be completely blocked, the architectural features of the project are complementary to the desert setting, and the elevation of the site is low lying in comparison to some of the nearby roads, the project would have a less than significant effect on a scenic vista.

### Scenic Resources and Scenic Highways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threshold</th>
<th>Would the proposed project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

There are no State-designated scenic highways located within the Town of Yuca Valley. SR-62 is an eligible State scenic highway, but is not an officially designated State scenic highway. SR-62, however, is designated as a local scenic roadway in the Town of Yuca Valley Comprehensive General Plan; therefore, for the purpose of this analysis, SR-62 would be treated as a State scenic highway. There are no substantial rock outcroppings or historic buildings in the immediate vicinity of the project site; however, Joshua Trees are located on the site and are a scenic resource that can be viewed from SR-62.

Policy 6 of the Biological Resources Element requires developers to salvage native Joshua Trees and shrubs for incorporation into project landscaping or to transplant trees to other sites. It is the intent of the Town of Yuca Valley to preserve and protect all Joshua Trees; however, according to Ordinance 140, this “intent and desire shall be balanced against the community’s need for growth and the development rights of individual property owners.” Ordinance 140 further states that no existing
View Simulation 1
FIGURE 4.1.2

Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan
Draft Environmental Impact Report
Perspective from Southwest looking Northeast

View Simulation 2

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FIGURE 4.1.3

View Simulation 3

Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan
Draft Environmental Impact Report
Perspective from Northwest looking Southeast
regulated native plant, such as the Joshua Tree, shall be disturbed, moved (transplanted or otherwise), removed, or destroyed unless it is first reviewed and approved by the Town of Yucca Valley by way of a Native Plant Permit. It is acknowledged in Ordinance 140 that existing Joshua Trees may be transplanted to another location on the same property or may be made available for adoption through the Town’s Joshua Tree Preservation and Adoption Program.

Joshua Trees that are located on the project site were inventoried during a Native Plant Survey (Michael Brandman Associates, May 2006), and a total of 129 Joshua trees were found within the project site. Of those 129 Joshua trees, approximately 92 of the existing Joshua trees on the project site were determined to be likely to be relocated successfully, and therefore, where feasible, would be incorporated into the landscaping plan of the proposed project, pursuant to the approved Joshua Tree Recovery Plan which would be approved by the Town of Yucca Valley as a condition of approval. The Joshua Tree Survey and Salvage Plan (which is included in the Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan) evaluates suitable areas for transplanting trees within the Specific Plan area based on grading plans, soil conditions, and tree density. Much of the salvage and replanting of existing Joshua Trees would take place within the project site, and, as appropriate, the remaining salvaged trees would be put up for adoption pursuant to the Joshua Tree Preservation and Adoption Program. Any Joshua Trees that are required to be removed according to the Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan would be removed consistent with the grading permit granted by the Town of Yucca Valley for the proposed project.

The Joshua Tree Survey and Salvage Plan of the proposed project conforms to Policy 6 of the Biological Resources Element and with the Town of Yucca Valley Ordinance No. 140 (Native Plant Permit and Joshua Tree Preservation and Adoption Program); therefore, there would be a less than significant impact with respect to scenic resources (Joshua Trees) within a State scenic highway.

Existing Visual Character or Quality of Site and Its Surroundings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threshold</th>
<th>Would the proposed project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The proposed project would result in the development and operation of a Wal-Mart Supercenter. The proposed project site is undeveloped and surrounded by office/administrative uses to the west, scattered single-family residential uses to the north across SR-62 and to the southwest across Avalon Avenue, and by vacant land to the south and east. East of the project site, the Town has recently approved a 137,283-square foot Home Depot building. The Home Depot building would be approximately 550 feet across and approximately 265 feet deep. The building would range in height from 20 feet high at the outdoor garden center, to 37 feet at the highest point above the entrance, and a maximum height of 28 feet along the rear wall. The Home Depot store would be set back from SR-62 by approximately 694 feet with smaller retail buildings and a restaurant oriented closer to the highway. Additional retail includes three retail buildings totaling 34,610 square feet and a 3,000-square foot restaurant. Although the eventual land uses and the architectural details of the buildings that will occupy the approved Home Depot Retail center are unknown, it is reasonable to anticipate that they will be developed with a variety of commercial, service, and restaurant uses, similar in size and scale to the proposed project. While the proposed project would alter the current aesthetic

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1 Joshua trees are the only regulated native plant species listed in Ordinance 140 that occur within the project area.
condition of the site, the development of the proposed commercial use would continue the development trend for the south frontage of SR-62 in the vicinity.

The proposed retail uses are consistent with the current General Commercial District zoning for the site and with the current General Plan designation of General Commercial. The General Plan designation of General Commercial would not be changed to implement the proposed project, while the proposed Specific Plan provides for the development of commercial retail uses consistent with the existing General Commercial zoning on the site. In addition, the proposed project would match the existing urban core/corridor that has developed along SR-62. According to the General Plan (page III-13):

Commercial land uses are carefully distributed to maintain their primary focus along the Highway [State Route] 62 corridor. This trend has been reinforced in the [General] Plan to allow the community to maximize and strengthen the Town’s position as a regional commercial center, while also allowing the community to preserve its primarily low density, rural residential character. While a few satellite commercial districts have been sited away from the Highway [State Route] 62 corridor, they are designated as commercial nodes, rather than designations that would encourage strip commercial development.

As planned by the Town of Yucca Valley, most of the commercial development in Yucca Valley occurs along SR-62. When the Town of Yucca Valley designated the project site to be General Commercial, a wide range of issues were considered. According to the Town of Yucca Valley Comprehensive General Plan (page III-89), these issues included the location, massing, and building height of projects. Following is a discussion of these features as they relate to the proposed project.

**Mass of Structures and Height.** The 229,000-square foot supercenter would stretch approximately 645 feet (east to west), parallel to and facing SR-62. The depth of the building would be approximately 420 feet (north to south). The maximum height of the building is 35 feet, which is less than the maximum allowed of 40 feet for General Commercial (Ordinance 88). In the Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan, the minimum lot size would be 0.9 acre. Therefore, the proposed commercial development would be constructed in a manner consistent with setback and height regulations contained in the Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan and other applicable zoning regulations.

Visual simulations are depicted in Figures 1.4.1 through 1.4.3. The visual simulations identify the type and aesthetic quality typically required of commercial uses by the Town. While the final design of the structure may differ from the renderings provided in this EIR, they are sufficient to assess the effect the development of the proposed project may have on aesthetic character of the project site and surrounding area. As shown in Figures 1.4.1 through 1.4.3, variations in horizontal and vertical massing are proposed to avoid featureless appearance typically associated with the façades of “supercenter” uses. This variation in massing creates the appearance of multiple, smaller uses rather than a single use. The varied roofline and roofline treatment adds to the illusion of multiple uses. A variety of architectural elements proposed include a decorative façade incorporating arches and columns, breaks in height, and decorative cornices, and faced ornamentation. Architectural treatments vary in color, texture and application. Furthermore, landscape features would be provided in setbacks to provide a visual barrier between roadways and SR-62.
Detailed reviews of the project design elements by the Town of Yucca Valley would occur via the project proponent’s processing of a site development permit prior to issuance of building permits. It is clear that the project would be developed in a manner consistent with existing development trends along SR-62 and regulated by the development requirements contained in the Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan. Additionally, as the Town has designated the project site for commercial uses through the General Plan land use designation, the site has been planned for commercial uses by the Town for quite some time. While the proposed project would change the character of the site, this change is consistent with the Town’s vision for the site. For these reasons, the project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its immediate surroundings. Consequently, the project would create a less than significant impact to the character of the site and its immediate surroundings.

**Potentially Significant Impacts**

The following impacts were determined to be potentially significant. A potential impact would occur with the proposed project, and, therefore, mitigation measures are required.

**Impact 4.1.1 Light and Glare**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threshold</th>
<th>Would the proposed project create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

General provisions for lighting in the *Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan* include those for parking areas and access ways, signage, and security. For parking areas and access ways, all lighting would be installed as required to conform to Ordinance 90, *Regulations for Outdoor Lighting and Night Sky Protection*. The project has been designed with pole heights, full cut-off light fixtures, and shielded fixtures around the perimeter of the site, to comply with the requirements of Ordinance 90 to reduce light pollution. This includes shielding of parking area light fixtures to diminish nuisance spillover effects on surrounding properties. Signage lighting would be in conformance with signage specifications and standards. As for security lighting, for the major anchor, wall-mounted light fixtures would be located at intervals along the rear and side elevation walls, to include the rear loading dock.

These general lighting provisions of the proposed project take into consideration Community Design Element Policy 12 by attempting to preserve the value of the community’s night sky. In addition, the project is in compliance with Ordinance 156: background colors of signs are not white (to reduce glare), and in many cases, dark backgrounds with lighter shades for lettering are used.

The proposed structures do not include the installation of large reflective surfaces (e.g., glass or polished metal). As the project does not include the installation of any large areas of reflective surfaces, the proposed project would not result in significant impacts associated with an increase in the amount of daytime glare in the project area. Impacts associated with daytime glare are considered to be less than significant.

In spite of the reduction of lighting impacts provided in the *Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan*, development of the project site would introduce into the area a new source of nighttime light and
glare in the form of glass or polished metal, signage, building lights, and parking lot lighting. Uses to the north and west are separated from the proposed project by roadways. These roadways, essentially acting as buffers from the proposed project’s nighttime glare, are lighted at night for the safety of motorists. Thus, the proposed project would not affect the nighttime views of the land uses to the north and west, and nighttime lighting impacts affecting these areas are considered to be less than significant. The project could create a potentially significant impact from spillover light toward the adjacent properties to the east and south, however, and mitigation measures are required.

**Mitigation Measures.** To ensure that nighttime light and glare impacts are reduced to less than significant levels, the following mitigation measures would be applied to the project in addition to implementing the Town’s applicable ordinances:

**4.1.1A** Pole-mounted floodlights at the main entry façade shall be fitted with glare shields or adjustable “barn doors” to control unwanted spill light.

**4.1.1B** All exterior wall-mounted area lights on project buildings, the fast-food drive-through lane lights, and the fast-food restaurant parking lot lights shall be equipped with “cut-off” optics to mitigate spillover light and direct glare within the project boundary. Specifically, the Illumination Engineering Society (IES) definition for the cut-off fixture classification is as follows: Intensity at 80 degrees from nadir (0-degree-angle pointing directly downward from the lighting fixture) does not exceed 100 candela (cd) per 1000 lamp lumens, nor at 90 degrees from nadir does the intensity exceed 25 cd per 1,000 lamp lumens.

**4.1.1C** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the applicant shall submit to the Town a photometric study (to include parking areas and access way lights, external security lights, and lighted signage), proving that the project light sources do not spill over to adjacent off-site properties.

**Level of Significance after Mitigation.** Adherence to the proposed mitigation measures would reduce potential light and glare impacts to a less than significant level by ensuring that there is no spillover light from on-site lighting.

**4.1.5 Cumulative Impacts**

As discussed above, the proposed project would produce a less than significant impact on scenic vistas, scenic resources, the character of the site and its surroundings, and a less than significant impact with implementation of Mitigation Measures 4.1.1A, 4.1.1B, and 4.1.1C related to light and glare. As a result, project-specific impacts are less than significant.

Cumulative projects are shown in Chapter 2.0, Table 2.A and Figure 2.1. There are no other development projects that would, in combination with the proposed project, produce a significant impact associated with aesthetics. The Home Depot Center project (Cumulative project Y5, Table 2.A) is located adjacent and to the east of the proposed project site. This commercial development would include construction of a large home improvement store and smaller retail
buildings, resulting in similar impacts to scenic vistas, scenic resources, the character of the site and its surroundings, and light and glare as identified for the proposed project.

The cumulative effect on scenic vistas from the combination of the proposed project and Home Depot Retail project would be less than significant, because vistas would generally not be affected from viewpoints away from the projects’ sites. Although the development of the proposed project and Home Depot Retail project would partially block views of vicinity hillsides and ridges from vantage points near the project’s roadway frontages, vistas would not be completely blocked from viewpoints off the project site and adjacent roads. The Specific Plan, the Town of Yucca Valley’s General Plan development guidelines, and the Development Code are designed to preserve scenic vistas and natural view corridors. Compliance with the proposed Specific Plan development standards and applicable existing adopted regulations would ensure that the proposed project would not result with significant impacts upon scenic vistas. As a result, the projects would create a less than significant cumulative impact on local scenic vistas.

The cumulative effect caused by the potential degradation of the existing visual character or quality of project surroundings from the combination of the proposed and Home Depot projects would be less than significant because both projects would be developed in a manner consistent with existing development trends along SR-62 and regulated by applicable land use development requirements contained in the Specific Plan and Zoning Code.

The proposed and Home Depot projects would be constructed with similar outdoor and parking lighting, which could potentially create light and glare impacts additive to the impacts associated with either project individually. It is reasonable to assume, however, that the Home Depot Center would have similar requirements to the proposed project to reduce spillover light on adjacent properties. Conditions of Approval for the Home Depot project include a condition that requires that “all exterior lighting shall comply with the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance and shall be illustrated on all construction plans.” With implementation of conditions of approval and Mitigation Measures 4.1.1A, 4.1.1B, and 4.1.1C, which include the submittal of a photometric study validating that project lighting would not spillover onto adjacent properties, impacts associated with light and glare from the both projects would be less than significant. Because the Home Depot project would have similar requirements to contain light on-site, no spillover of light on adjacent uses would occur. Uses to the north and west are separated from the proposed projects by lighted roadways; therefore, impacts toward these areas are considered less than significant. There are no projects that would, in combination with the proposed project, produce a significant light and glare impact. Therefore, there are no significant cumulative impacts associated with aesthetics.