3.1 AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

While the Zoo is not highly visible through topography, vegetation, and intervening development within Griffith Park, several proposed new structures would extend above the existing tree canopy and potentially intrude into views from Griffith Park trails across the Zoo or towards urban skylines. The proposed Project would also replace existing landscaping, temporarily changing the aesthetic quality of Zoo and its dense urban canopy as viewed from within the zoo and from surrounding public trails in Griffith Park; however, impacts from construction would be temporary. Based on visual simulations of select proposed improvements, the Project would not adversely affect public views of the Zoo itself and, with mitigation would not generate significant light or glare. However, construction of the proposed parking structure and a below-grade crossing or roundabout intersection improvement would substantially change the visual character of the Zoo Drive gateway to Griffith Park, which would result in significant and unavoidable impacts to aesthetic and visual resources.

This section describes the existing visual resources within the Los Angeles Zoo (Zoo) and the surrounding vicinity, and analyzes the potential impacts on public views and scenic resources that could result from implementation of the Los Angeles Zoo Vision Plan (Vision Plan; Project). Per the City’s Conservation Element, scenic views or vistas are the panoramic public view access to natural features, including views of the ocean, striking or unusual natural terrain, or unique urban or historic features. Public access to these views is from park lands, private and publicly owned sites, and public rights-of-way. This analysis identifies visual or scenic resources and considers both short-term construction impacts and long-term impacts of Project development on those resources.

3.1.1 Environmental Setting

Regulatory Setting

Local laws and regulations have been enacted to preserve visual resources within the City. There are no federal regulations that apply to the Project.

State Regulations

Caltrans Scenic Highway Program.

Caltrans defines a scenic highway as any freeway, highway, road, or other public rights-of-way that traverses an area of exceptional scenic quality. Suitability for designation as a State Scenic Highway is based on vividness, intactness, and unity. There are no designated scenic highways in the Project vicinity (Caltrans 2019).
Local Regulations

City of Los Angeles General Plan

The Los Angeles General Plan includes multiple elements, including state-mandated elements (e.g., Mobility, Housing, Conservation, etc.) that address citywide topics, as well as community plans that guide land use and development for individual communities in the City. Griffith Park is located within both the Hollywood Community Plan and Northeast Los Angeles Plan areas.

City of Los Angeles Conservation Element

Section 15 of the Conservation Element defines scenic views or vistas as “the panoramic public view access to natural features, including views of the ocean, striking or unusual natural terrain, or unique urban or historic features.” The Conservation Element contains goals and policies to protect scenic vistas. It describes the Santa Monica Mountains, visible from Griffith Park, as the most important visible topographic feature throughout much of Los Angeles. Related policies and programs acknowledge scenic vistas as being irreplaceable resources and propose the protection and conservation of natural and scenic resources, although no specific scenic vistas are designated or mapped. The Conservation Element adopts the following policies related to scenic vistas and landforms:

- **Objective**: protect and reinforce natural and scenic vistas as irreplaceable resources and for the aesthetic enjoyment of present and future generations.
- **Policy**: continue to encourage and/or require property owners to develop their properties in a manner that will, to the greatest extent practical, retain significant existing land forms (e.g., ridge lines, bluffs, unique geologic features) and unique scenic features (historic, ocean, mountains, unique natural features) and/or make possible public view or other access to unique features or scenic views.

City of Los Angeles Framework Element

The Framework Element provides strategies for long-term development and growth that sets a citywide context to guide the subsequent amendments of the City’s community plans, zoning ordinances, and other pertinent programs. These plans together form the City’s Land Use Element per state general plan law. Chapter 6 of Framework Element contains goals, objectives, and policies for the provision, management, and conservation of Los Angeles’ open space resources. Objective 6.1 recommends the protection of the City’s natural setting from the encroachment of future development and Policy 6.1.2 recommends preserving natural viewsheds, whenever possible, in hillside and coastal areas, such as those encompassing Griffith Park.

City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan 2035

The City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan 2035 guides transportation and mobility decisions in the City through year 2035, coupled with supporting documents and discretionary actions to
further align the City’s street standards, processes and procedures with the goals of the Mobility Plan 2035. This plan includes an inventory of designated scenic highways. No scenic highways are designated within or near the Project site. The nearest City designated scenic roadway/highway is a segment of Riverside Drive, just south of Griffith Park and approximately 2.3 miles south of the Project site.

**Hollywood Community Plan 2012**

From 2005 to 2012, the Hollywood Community Plan Update, which covers the entire geographical area of Griffith Park, underwent a comprehensive planning process with extensive community outreach. In 2011 the Hollywood Community Plan Update’s Draft and Final EIR was published. A year later, the Hollywood Community Plan Update was adopted by the City Council and signed by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa in late June 2012 (City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning 2012). The plan became effective on August 6, 2012. However, following plan adoption, a legal challenge to the 2012 Environmental Impact Report (EIR) occurred and the 2012 Hollywood Community Plan Update was rescinded. The City reverted to the 1988 Hollywood Community Plan and prior zoning regulations. In 2018, a new draft plan EIR was published. As of fall 2020, the latest Hollywood Community Plan Update, referred to as (HCUP2) has been presented to the public during a virtual open house and public hearing on December 9, 2020. Adoption of the HCPU2 is projected to occur in early 2021. If approved, the HCPU2 would adopt the following guiding principles applicable to aesthetics and visual resources:

- Enhance the livability of all neighborhoods by upgrading the quality of development and improving the quality of the public realm.
- Maximize the use of the City’s existing open space network and recreation facilities by investing in the existing community and enhancing those facilities and providing access and linkages, particularly from targeted growth areas and economically disadvantages areas, to the existing regional and community open space systems.
- Ensure that the City’s open spaces contribute positively to the stability and identity of the communities and neighborhoods in which they are located or through which they pass.
- Conserve natural resource and minimize detrimental impacts.

**Hollywood Community Plan 1988**

Until the previously described 2012 Hollywood Community Plan receives approval, the 1988 Hollywood Community Plan shall remain in effect. The 1988 Hollywood Community Plan includes objectives to encourage the preservation of open space and the preservation of views, natural character, and topography of mountainous parts of the Community for the enjoyment of both residents and visitors throughout the Los Angeles region. The plan also encourages creation of the Los Angeles River Greenbelt corridor which would be integrated with existing and proposed parks, bicycle paths, equestrian trails, and scenic routes.
3.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

1978 Griffith Park Master Plan (Non-adopted Local Plan)

Although not officially adopted, the 1978 Griffith Park Master Plan established an important informal policy framework that has helped guide planning and facilities development within the park over the last few decades. A major goal presented by the Griffith Park Master Plan involves creating visual quality and visual coherence throughout Griffith Park. The Griffith Park Master Plan identifies six focal areas within Griffith Park: Zoo Gateway at the proposed Project site, Valley Gateway (Forest Lawn Drive), Toyon Meadow (Park wilderness area), Green Park Corridor (connections between Valley Gateway and other popular attractions within the easterly portion of Griffith Park), Natural Zone (Park interior), and the Los Feliz (Boulevard) Gateway. Other objectives specific to Park aesthetics include:

- Enhancing the beauty and scale of the vast natural areas to promote Griffith Park’s scenic and open space values;
- Improving and expanding trail systems;
- Improving the visual and environmental quality of developed recreation areas at Park entrances as well as around the perimeter of Griffith Park;
- Making efficient use of existing facilities and developed areas prior to utilizing additional parklands for new facilities;
- Integrating new facilities into Griffith Park landscape in such a way “...as to strengthen Griffith Park’s image and to complement the recreational environment;”
- Continuing “the established civic function” of Griffith Park;
- Achieving better Park edge definition through use of earth berms and native and riparian landscape elements; and
- Rehabilitating natural vegetation.

Griffith Park Vision Plan

In 2013, the City Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) released the draft “Vision Plan for Griffith Park: An Urban Wilderness Identity.” The plan was originally conceived as a “Master Plan,” then changed to a “Vision Plan” and finally adopted as “A Vision for Griffith Park” by the Los Angeles Recreation and Park Commission on January 8, 2014. The Plan states that while it is not a Master Plan for Griffith Park, the Griffith Park Master Plan Working Group, the City, and RAP intended the Plan to guide decisions made for Griffith Park until a full Master Plan is developed and adopted. However, the Griffith Park Vision Plan has neither the force nor effect of a master plan since it was not adopted as such. Further, the Griffith Park Vision Plan states that it does not apply to the 133-acre Zoo property because RAP has no jurisdiction over the Zoo property, including the Zoo parking lots. Therefore, the vision, planning, and decision-making process for the Zoo property is independent of RAP since it is operated and controlled by the Zoo Department.

The Griffith Park Vision Plan states that Griffith Park should retain an urban wilderness identity. The Griffith Park Vision Plan states that “there is a growing recognition that one of the Park’s greatest values for 21st century Los Angeles is its ability to reconnect people with
the natural world”. The Griffith Park Vision Plan also acknowledges the unique developed portions of the park, including the Zoo and the Autry Museum of the West. North Zoo Drive is designated a Park Gateway for motorists and other visitors. The Griffith Park Vision Plan includes the following goals and objectives that are specific to visual resources within the park:

- Motorized Vehicle Gateways should distinguish the park from its urban environment.
- Consistent with the park’s Urban Wilderness Identity, any gateway structures should be modest in scale, with minimal surrounding hardscape.
- Any reconfiguration of Park Gateways should include the prioritization of an entrance to the park from Interstate 5 (southbound) as the lack of an exit from Interstate 5 (southbound), serving the northeast corner of the Park, likely increases traffic on both Los Feliz Boulevard and Griffith Park Drive.
- Promote natural qualities, minimize new urban intrusions in the Wilderness Area and provide for informal recreation.
- Evaluate new uses, programs and facilities, or expansion of existing uses, programs, and facilities, against the criteria of enhancing the Park’s natural attributes and resources and preserving and maintaining the Urban Wilderness Identity.
- Promote an Urban Wilderness Identity in the Park Reinforced by the Design of Facilities and Amenities
  - Define and consistently reinforce the unique character of the Park.
  - Develop and implement design guidelines throughout the Park for improvements and repairs to existing facilities, amenities, and infrastructure.
  - Develop Park signage and Park information consistent with the Urban Wilderness Identity.
  - Manage the built environment of the park in such a manner that maintenance, rehabilitation, restoration, and new construction maintain a character compatible with the urban wilderness identity.

**City of Los Angeles Municipal Code Lighting Requirements**

Lighting is regulated by various sections of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC). The lighting provisions require that parking lot lighting be directed away from streets and residences, requires exterior light sources to be designed, located, and arranged to direct light away from any adjacent streets and residences, and limits the amount of exterior light intensity or glare on residential windows, porches, or recreational areas. These requirements apply to lighting and glare as viewed or cast onto residential properties.
3.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

Existing Setting

Visual Character of the Project Vicinity

The City lies central to the Los Angeles Basin where the San Gabriel and Santa Susana Mountains bound the City on the north, the Santa Monica Mountains extend across the middle of the City, and the Palos Verdes Hills and Pacific Ocean are on the south and west. The topography rises from sea level to 5,074 feet (Sister Elsie station in the San Gabriel Mountain foothills in Tujunga). The Santa Monica Mountains are the most visible feature from many areas of the city. They are 60 miles long and stretch from Elysian Park and Griffith Parks in the City to Point Mugu State Park in Ventura County. The Los Angeles River and its associated tributaries and flood plains also are prominent topographic features.

The Zoo is in the east central area of the City within Griffith Park, one of the largest municipal parks with urban wilderness in the U.S. and the largest park in the City. Griffith Park offers open space and a natural wilderness within a highly urbanized area otherwise characterized by extensive urban development. Located at the base of eastern foothills of the Santa Monica Mountains, Griffith Park is comprised of steep terrain ranging in elevations from 384 to 1,625 feet above sea level. Peak elevation points are generally located along ridgelines at the center and central west area of Griffith Park. Ridgelines sprawl outwards towards the edges of Griffith Park forming steep canyons and flatter areas at the edges of Griffith Park, where most development is located. Griffith Park’s topography and high ridgelines separate development and structures located at the northern and western edges of Griffith Park from those located at southern end.

Griffith Park is a natural mountainous area surrounded by the developed communities within the City, as well as adjacent cities of Glendale and Burbank. Adjacent City neighborhoods or communities include Los Feliz to the south, Atwater Village to the east, and Hollywood Hills to the west. These communities are generally characterized by large single-family homes on large lots. Glendale communities neighboring Griffith Park to the east and northeast include low-density residential, commercial, and industrial uses, including the DreamWorks animation studios, Walt Disney studios, and ABC studios. Burbank communities neighboring Griffith Park to the north also include single-family residential, commercial, and industrial uses, such as Warner Brothers studios. Development in these communities is generally low-lying but dense and organized on roadway networks.
Griffith Park is generally undeveloped open space with rich vegetation, including oak woodlands and other native habitat areas (see Section 3.3, Biological Resources). Development is limited to specific visitor attractions and City service buildings. Notable built structures in Griffith Park contributing to the built aesthetic of Griffith Park include the Greek Theater, Griffith Observatory, the Travel Town Transportation Museum, the Autry Museum of the American West, and the Griffith Merry-Go-Round. There are also playgrounds, picnic areas, and hiking trails available throughout the park. Buildings are low-lying (generally less than two stories). The general architectural designs of the buildings include the use of stone, stucco, and natural or colored concrete with muted colors, contributing to the natural character of Griffith Park. Parking is provided in surface parking lots near attractions and trailheads and on-street parking. There are currently no parking garages in the park.

**Project Site and Vicinity**

The Zoo lies in an area of Griffith Park dominated by dense chaparral and oak woodland vegetation, and the Zoo and segments of bordering roads are heavily forested, including Zoo Drive and Crystal Springs Drive. Surrounding terrain and mountainous slopes are milder than the central ridgelines of Griffith Park. The Zoo sits within a hilly area with vertical rise ranging from 460 to 650 feet above mean sea level. The Zoo is bounded by open natural lands.
within Griffith Park and the skyline trail, Zoo Drive, a dense windrow of mature trees (e.g., eucalyptus) and the Main Trail, and SR-134, an 8-lane freeway to the north. Western Heritage Way, the Autry Museum of the American West, the 12-lane I-5, and the Los Angeles River lie to the east. Wilson and Harding Golf Courses lies to the south and southeast, Griffith Park Drive and the hillsides rising to Amir’s Garden overlook to the southwest, and mostly natural, hilly terrain and the Condor Trail to the west.

The Zoo lies at the base of Griffith Park hillsides that descend to relatively flat and level terrain near the Los Angeles River. As a result, the Zoo is tucked into the landscape where the natural hillsides surrounding the interior canyon of the Zoo and the dense tree canopies along Zoo Drive act as natural visual buffers. These natural features effectively shield the Zoo from outside public views from the two adjacent freeways and adjacent communities. Views into the Zoo are generally distant and only available from overview points along the Skyline Trail, Condor Trail, and Amir’s Garden. Because the Zoo is heavily vegetated with mature trees and vegetation and the existing structures within the Zoo are generally low-lying and small scale (i.e., less than two stories), the Zoo is not highly visible to the public. Zoo facilities are generally shrouded by dense trees and vegetation. Similarly, views from within the Zoo are limited to interior areas since natural topography and Zoo vegetation generally block views Griffith Park ridgelines, hillsides, and other regional features.

The Zoo occupies approximately 133 acres consisting of 102 acres of development and 32 of undeveloped area and open land. The developed area of the Zoo embodies an exotic and natural character, as is lushly landscaped, including thousands of mature trees. Many of the Zoo animal environmental are open, uncovered, and/or designed to mimic the natural terrain of the bioclimate they naturally inhabit. For example, the Sea Life Cliffs include an aquatic habitat that replicates a rocky cove for harbor seal and sea lions. Further, some animal environments were constructed by excavating into the terrain and forming artificial topography, giving the sense that the animal environment is built into the Zoo’s natural environment. For example, the Chimpanzees of Mahale Mountain, which was added to the Zoo in 1988, was constructed by building into the hillside and adding large boulders and a waterfall. Existing development, animal environments, and walkways are concentrated within the Zoo’s central and eastern areas on level and gently sloping valley bottom areas.
Some development, such as the aviary and otter animal environments, extend up steeper hillsides near the Zoo’s perimeter, and are bordered by dense native habitats or mixed eucalyptus woodlands. Built structures that lie on the Zoo periphery are typically reserved for service or conservation uses such as equipment yards, storage, the Gottlieb Animal Health and Conservation Center, the California condor (Gymnogyps californianus) conservation facilities, and a perimeter access road.

Most structures within Zoo grounds are older and reflect architecture from the 1960s when Zoo construction initially first began, or when Zoo redevelopments occur between the 1970s and the early 2000s. Approximately one-third of visitor serving areas have been completely remade since 1998. These areas include: the elephants of Asia, LAIR, Rainforest, the entry plaza, Campo Gorilla Reserve, the conservation center, Chimpanzees of Mahale Mountain, Red Ape Rainforest, the Angela Collier Bird Show Theater, and the Winnick Family Children’s Zoo, the carousel, Francois’ langur, Children’s Discovery Center, the Condor conservation areas, and the main parking lot. Consequently, the built structures occupying the Zoo are inconsistent in their visual and historic character (see also, Section 3.4, Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources).

However, taken together, the structures and layout of the Project site are characteristic of a zoo campus, providing visitor-serving uses and Zoo facilities within buildings designed with animal and conservation themes and with styles representative of locations and cultures around the world. Development is very low density, separated by a network of walking paths and animal environment areas. Open areas, walking paths, and animal environments have been landscaped with lush and dense vegetation with a mature urban forest canopy in many places to create a wild and exotic aesthetic for Zoo guests. Zoo guests first enter the Zoo from a 40-foot-wide expanse of concrete walkways and stairs ascending to the animal environment areas from the main entrance gates. Guests are greeted by lines of palm trees immediately
3.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

visible from the entryway. Walking paths leading from the entrance to the Zoo’s animal environment areas are wide and meandering.

A substantial portion of the Zoo grounds is comprised of the botanical gardens and lushly vegetated areas adjacent to developed walkways. Plants throughout the Zoo are grouped based on their indigenous habitats and match the geographic themes of the Zoo (Africa, South America, North America, etc.) With more than 7,000 individual plants representing more than 800 species growing within the Zoo’s botanical gardens, the landscaping creates a vigorous green vegetation cover surrounding visitors as they walk throughout the Zoo. Even the undeveloped hills that have not undergone selective or ornamental landscaping contribute to the Zoo’s densely vegetated character with their dense, native chaparral and oak woodland, as well as over 30 acres of mixed eucalyptus woodland.

The entrance to the Zoo comprises an expansive surface parking lot, local two-lane roadways, and pathways connecting pedestrians, equestrians, and cyclists with Griffith Park trails and facilities. This area of the Project site is relatively open and flat, providing access to sunlight and open sky views. The iconic Zoo sign is highly visible from the parking lot and local roadways, including Zoo Drive, Western Heritage Way, and Crystal Springs Drive, but becomes hidden beyond this immediate vicinity. The Project site in this area is surrounded by mature trees, including eucalyptus and oaks, which imparts a natural setting, welcoming visitors to the Zoo. Given the location of the Project site at the I-5 off-ramp, this area is a gateway to Griffith Park, as designated by the Griffith Park Vision Plan. Here, visitors leave urbanized neighborhoods and regional freeways and transition to the natural wilderness of Griffith Park.

Public Views and Scenic Vistas

Scenic views or vistas are panoramic public views access to natural features, including views of the ocean, striking or unusual natural terrain, or unique urban or historic features (City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning 2001). Griffith Park is recognized as an important scenic area within the City. Griffith Park offers a unique blend of natural environment and built cultural structures to visitors. Though no official designation exists for the scenic resources of Griffith Park, the official RAP trail map for Griffith Park identifies multiple locations for “scenic vistas”. The closest RAP recommended vistas to the Zoo are Dante’s View and Mount Hollywood, both located roughly one mile from the Zoo. The Zoo is only distantly visible from either of these viewpoints.

The scenic value offered of natural resources and views within Griffith Park are considered by many to have iconic or intrinsic scenic value, and the importance of these values is
emphasized in the Griffith park Vision Plan. Many of the popular attractions in Griffith Park also serve as cultural icons such as the Hollywood Sign, Griffith Observatory, and the Zoo. Park roads carry thousands of vehicle trips from park visitors, sightseers, and cut-through traffic, as well as heavy volumes of bicycle traffic. Hikers, runners, and equestrians use the Park’s trail system, with four major trails offering some views of the Zoo, including North Trail, Skyline Trail, Mineral Wells Trail, and Condor Trail.

**Views from Adjacent Trails**

Miles of trails connecting landscaped parkland with elevated scenic viewpoints on the areas natural undeveloped ridges and hillsides make Griffith Park a popular hiking spot for City residents and tourists alike. Hiking trails also provide access and views to important cultural structures within Griffith Park, nearby mountain ranges such as the San Gabriel and Santa Monica mountains, iconic city skylines such as downtown Los Angeles or downtown Glendale, the urban night sky, and surrounding urban lights. These natural dirt trails generally lack railing or development, adding to their rugged, natural aesthetic. Various destination points along the trails provide views of Griffith Parks natural landscape and hillsides covered in natural chaparral communities and vegetation native of southern California as well as distant views of surrounding communities.

Higher elevation trails at Griffith Park’s northern region, such as North Trail, Skyline Trail, Mineral Wells Trail, and Condor Trail, reaching up to roughly 1,200 feet provide views of facilities in Griffith Park’s north end, including the Los Angeles Zoo, the Wilson and Harding Golf Course, and the Mount Sinai Memorial Park adjacent to Griffith Park. The Skyline Trail and Condor Trail traverse ridgelines surrounding the Zoo to the west. These trails sometimes pass close to the Zoo boundary fence but are mostly well separated from the Zoo by intervening canyons or ridgelines in Griffith Park. The North Trail is more removed from the Zoo, but its higher elevation allows some more open views overlooking the Zoo. The Main Trail runs along Zoo Drive to the north and provides some views through to the Zoo. However, dense vegetation bordering these trails, the urban forest within the Zoo and the distance of these trails from existing Zoo development, limit the prominence of Zoo structures, roads, or other development from these vantage points.

Regionally, the Project site is only partially visible from local roads or elevated locations, such as upper elevation trails in Griffith Park, but clear views are highly limited by distance and
intervening topography, vegetation, and development in the region. Views of the Project site from identified key viewing locations are further described below in Section 3.1.3, Environmental Impact Analysis.

**Views from Adjacent Highways**

Griffith Park and the Zoo vicinity is generally bordered by State Route 134 (SR-134) and Interstate 5 (I-5) on the north and east. Views from segments of I-5 and SR-134 that run near Griffith Park are generally characterized by the residential, commercial, and industrial buildings with ornamental landscaping adjacent to the roadways. Griffith Park provides some visual relief along these transportation corridors. Distant views of the Verdugo Hills and San Gabriel Mountains are available to vehicles traveling east or west on SR 134 and northbound vehicles on the I-5. A small network of roadways within Griffith Park surround the Project site. While the Zoo and its interior are typically not visible from these roadways, the hillsides surrounding and enclosing the Zoo often contribute to the scenery available to drives along these roads.

**Designated State Scenic Highways**

The California Scenic Highway Program, maintained by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), protects State Scenic Highway corridors from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. According to the California State Scenic Highway Program, the section of SR-134 and I-5 in the Project vicinity are not designated or eligible for State Scenic Highway designation (Caltrans 2020).

**Local Roadways**

Views of the Project site from local roadways are available in the immediate vicinity of the Project site from Griffith Park Drive, Zoo Drive, Crystal Springs Drive, and Western Heritage Way. Views afforded from these roadways are described further below, and generally include those of undeveloped, forested or natural lands within Griffith Park, open space such as the Wilson and Harding Golf Course, and distinctive, isolated structures such as the Autry Museum of the American West; however, while offering attractive views, none of these roadways are formally designated as scenic roadways or routes. The nearest designated scenic roadway to the Project site is a segment of Riverside Drive that extends from Stadium Road to Los Feliz Boulevard, approximately 2.3 miles south of the Project site, just below Griffith Park.
Los Angeles Zoo Vision Plan
City of Los Angeles

3.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

Park (City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning 2001). The Zoo is not visible from this segment of Riverside Drive.

- **Zoo Drive:** Located along the northern edge of the Zoo and Zoo parking lot, Zoo Drive is one of the main roads used to reach the Zoo. The road courses along the edge of Griffith Park through a tree-lined corridor to the main Zoo parking lot entrance. From its intersection with Riverside Drive roughly 1 mile to the west, travelers on Zoo Drive experience bucolic views of natural hillsides of Griffith Park to the south and mature tree-lined parkway to the north. Approaching the Zoo, views available to vehicles and cyclists travelling along Zoo Drive, as well as to hikers, equestrians and runners of the adjacent Main Trail, include direct views of the Zoo’s 10-acre northern parking lot through evenly spaced trees lining the roadways, and a backdrop of rising vegetation-covered hillsides within portions of the Zoo and Griffith Park. The Zoo parking lot generally lacks trees or planters and on busy days can support a sea of roughly 1,000 parked cars. Except for peeks of the Zoo sign, Zoo structures are mostly obscured from this roadway. Along the northern side of Zoo Drive, the dense treelined pathway buffers Griffith Park from SR 134 and Los Angeles River and provides a green corridor traversed by the Main Trail. Occasional breaks in this tree corridor allow for short glimpses of the SR 134. Regardless of the relative visual prominence of the Zoo parking lot, the visual character of this corridor is softened by adjacent irrigated lawn, mature sycamore and eucalyptus trees and the split rail lined trail.

- **North Zoo Drive/Zoo Entrance Driveway:** North Zoo Drive provides a primary access to the Zoo from SR 134 and I-5. The Griffith Park Vision Plan designates this route as one of four gateways to the park. This roadway provides direct regional vehicular access to the Zoo and runs for roughly ¾ of a mile along the Los Angeles River corridor, terminating at the intersection of Zoo Drive and Western Heritage Way with the main Zoo entrance driveway. Drivers approaching the Zoo along this roadway have direct views between street trees down the main Zoo entry driveway and across portions of the northern parking lot toward an undeveloped hillside vegetated with native vegetation. Visitors entering the Zoo along this main driveway have views east
of the natural hillside and to the north of the large open paved areas of the northern parking lot backed by windrows of large specimen along Zoo Drive. Views to the south and southeast toward the Zoo entry are largely blocked by maturing parking lot trees in the main parking lot.

- **Western Heritage Way:** Western Heritage Way is a segment of roadway that runs primarily north-to-south for approximately 1,100 feet along the east end of the Zoo parking lot before merging into Zoo Drive; at its southern end, the road “dog legs” west for 600 feet along the southern edge of the Zoo parking lot to merge into Crystal Springs Drive. Western Heritage Way separates the Zoo from the Autry Museum of the American West. Travelers on this road pass along a tree lined corridor with the Autry Museum of the American West and its parking lot visible to the east. Landscaped trees and vegetation along and within the Zoo’s parking lot to the west soften views of the parking lot and screen most views of the Zoo’s entrance and of the hillsides of Griffith Park in the background. However, breaks in vegetation at parking lot ingress/egress points provide short views of the Zoo sign for passing motorists. The towering Verdugo Hills make up the scenic distant backdrop to the north. On road bikes also have limited views of the Zoo. Further, the Main Trail passes east of Autry Museum of the American West and, therefore, trail users’ views toward the Zoo are obscured by the Autry Museum of the American West along this reach.

- **Crystal Springs Drive:** Crystal Springs Drive travels north-to-south through the Wilson and Harding Golf Course for approximately 0.9-mile before intersecting with Western Heritage Way at the south end of the Zoo parking lot. Views from this roadway are dominated by the grass fairways of the golf course and tall eucalyptus trees lining the roadside and the fairways. The hills and ridgelines of Griffith Park form a backdrop to the west, while the Verdugo Hills are visible as a distant background to the north. For a brief segment of Crystal Springs Drive south of the Zoo, the trees lining the roadway thins and breaks. In this area, the southern border of the Zoo and associated structures is visible across the across the golf course fairways. The Zoo Magnet Center and parking lot is also briefly visible east of the road.

- **Griffith Park Drive:** Griffith Park Drive stems off Crystal Springs Drive south of the Zoo and winds through the surrounding hills. Griffith Park Drive approaches the Zoo’s southwest edge and a Zoo service and employee access gate to the Gottlieb Animal Health and Conservation Center is visible from the road. Griffith Park Drive travels
northwest to southeast and passes by the Griffith Park Composting Facility, weaves between the hillside of the Zoo and the slopes and hillsides of the surrounding Griffith Park, providing some of chaparral and oak woodland covered hillsides. Travelers on the road can see a brief section of the Zoo’s perimeter fencing, service entrance, and the Gottlieb Animal Health and Conservation Center. The Mineral Wells Trail and picnic area is also visible through breaks in the vegetation along the southern boundary of the road. Further east, the road diverges from the hillside, towards the Griffith Park Golf Shop and driving range. At this point, vegetation separating the Zoo from the roadway is characterized as a well-manicured lawn and limited shrubbery and trees to keep the driving range unobstructed. Consequently, the Zoo perimeter fencing may be visible from Griffith Park Drive; however, views of this section of fencing are largely obstructed by exterior fencing separating the driving range from Griffith Park Drive and shrubbery and trees that grow against the fence. The Golf shop and driving range parking lot, Wilson and Harding Golf Course, Shane’s Inspiration playground, and associated parking lots are also visible from Griffith Park Drive.

**Light and Glare**

Public exposure to light and glare varies substantially in the Project vicinity with urban developments in the cities of Los Angeles, Burbank, and Glendale having relatively high levels of lighting and glare. Effects of light and glare depends on the amount and location of outdoor light sources, reflective materials, and amount of traffic on roadways. Light impacts generally occur during the evening and nighttime hours. Light sources can have adverse effects if they affect public views, including direct light intrusion and indirect effects such as diminishing access to dark night skies. Glare is largely a daytime phenomenon, occurring when sunlight is reflected off highly polished surfaces or objects (e.g., windows, windshields) or light-colored surfaces. Glare can also result from vehicle headlights on adjacent roadways. Excessive glare not only restricts visibility but can also increase the ambient heat reflectivity in each area.

The Project site is in Griffith Park where light and glare levels in Griffith Park are virtually absent compared to surrounding developed areas in the City, Burbank, and Glendale. The urbanized areas surrounding the park and the Project site produce high levels of light and glare from interior building illumination, streetlights, exterior security lighting, and vehicle lights, causing a glow of light throughout the region that is highly visible from the hillsides in Griffith Park. Griffith Park provides visual relief from these sources with nearly 4,500 acres of undeveloped land and limited light sources.

Although the Project site is bordered by relatively intense development to the north and east, the parkways and bands of trees lining park roads reduce light spillover and the darker hills of Griffith Park lie to the west. As result, the site setting is relatively dark at night and does not experience predominant sources of glare during the day from structures. Within the Project site, light sources include typical building security lighting, indoor lighting, pathway
and street lighting, light from vehicle headlights, and flood lighting of the Zoo entrance sign. The Zoo’s main parking lot is lit at nighttime with light standards of roughly 15 feet in height spaced about 125 apart on each parking aisle. Although hood and directed downward, these light fixtures are a primary source of light spillover from the Zoo to immediately adjacent areas, such as Zoo Drive. Another lesser source of light spill into Griffith Park is from the well-lit Zoo entry and sign and adjacent buildings, though these sources are centrally located within the Zoo and light does not project substantially beyond the Project site. The Zoo’s northern parking lot is largely unlit.

The Zoo regularly hosts special after-hour events, including Brew at the Zoo, overnight camp programs, Roaring Nights, and its popular seasonal winter event, L.A. Zoo Lights where the Zoo extends operating hours from 6:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. and features light displays. Such activities use moderate decorative and security lighting that does not substantially escape the Zoo boundaries and does not exceed the intensity of surrounding light sources such as the adjacent golf course driving range.

Land uses that are typically sensitive to excess light and glare include residential uses, parks, senior housing, health care facilities, and other types of uses where excessive light and glare may disrupt sleep or other activities. In addition, light and glare may interfere with the vision of drivers. There are no residential or health care uses near the Project site that would be sensitive to light and glare. The recreational users within Griffith Park itself may be sensitive to light and glare, particularly public trail hikers that may experience diminished visual quality within the park if daytime glare or evening lighting spilled into natural areas. Public hiking trails within Griffith Park surrounding the Zoo or the Mineral Wells Picnic Area are public recreational amenities that could be affected by light and glare.

In addition to human receptors, natural biological resources such as bats and native wildlife can be sensitive to man-made light sources, as the lighting can disrupt feeding or movement patterns or reduce the suitability of potential habitat. Detailed discussion of potential impacts of light and glare on biological resources are discussed in Section 3.3, Biological Resources.
3.1.2 Impact Assessment Methodology

Significance Thresholds

According to Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, a project would have a significant impact related to aesthetic and visual resources if it would:

a. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

b. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings along a scenic highway?

c. In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

d. Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area?

In addition to the thresholds identified in Appendix G of the State and CEQA Guidelines, the L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide holds that the determination of significance shall be made on a case-by-case basis after considering the following factors:

- Effects on a scenic vista.
- Scenic resources within a state scenic highway.
- Existing visual character or quality of the site and surroundings.
- New sources of light or glare and existing day and nighttime views.

Non-applicable threshold(s):

- Threshold (b) (Scenic resources along a scenic highway): There are no existing designated scenic highways adjacent to or with views of the Zoo. The nearest designated scenic roadway is a segment of Riverside Drive within the City that extends from Stadium Road to Los Feliz Boulevard, approximately 2.3 miles south of the Project site, just south of Griffith Park. The Project site is in the northeast corner of Griffith Park. Neither the Project site nor its immediate surroundings are visible from this City-designated scenic roadway. Therefore, the proposed Project would not result in significant impacts to scenic resources located along or viewed from a scenic highway, and the issue will not be analyzed further in this EIR.

Methodology

Analysis of visual impacts of the Project is based upon field reconnaissance of the Project site and surroundings, documentation of public views from nearby roads and trails, and review and photographs of existing visual resources (e.g., trees, buildings, and view corridors). Visual reconnaissance of the Project site and surrounding areas was conducted by Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions on February 25, 2018 and by EIR subconsultant VIZt/x on January 2, 2020. The team hiked the Skyline, Condor and North Trails, and
informal spur trails or overlooks to observe and photograph the Project site and consider potential changes in scenic vistas or views that may occur under the Project. The team also drove Zoo Drive, Western Heritage Way, Crystal Springs Drive and Griffith Park Drive on multiple occasions, pausing to observe views of the Zoo and parking lots and consider potential Project effects on scenic resources and visual character provided along many segments of these roads. Field notes and photographs of existing visual resources of the Project site and vicinity are used to support this analysis. This information was utilized to identify important visual resources present on the Project site and in the vicinity. In addition, the Project site’s relationship to the surrounding natural environment and communities, and the relationship of relevant existing City policies for protecting visual resources was considered, along with Griffith Park planning documents.

**Scenic Views and Visual Character**

Existing trails and local roads near the Zoo provide the key public views or scenic viewpoints of the Zoo, as well as across the Zoo of the Los Angeles, Burbank, and Glendale urban environments (particularly the Glendale downtown skyline), and natural hillside and ridgelines of Griffith Park. Impact assessment for these scenic views depends upon the sensitivity of the resource, viewer susceptibility, viewing conditions (e.g., angle of view, distance, and primary viewing directions), degree of change, and visual contrasts to surroundings. These could include a change to existing features that no longer appear characteristic of the area or development that substantially or entirely blocks public views or removes key aesthetic features.

This analysis focuses on changes to public views such as those from local roads and public vantage points, including public open space and trails within Griffith Park. This analysis considers the field of view for different viewers; drivers and cyclists on local roadways are generally forward-facing in the direction of the traffic flow, whereas pedestrians and hikers can perceive views in any direction. This analysis also considers the different expectations of viewers; drivers and cyclists on roadways may be occupied with travel mechanics, other vehicles, and the immediate vicinity, whereas pedestrians, hikers, runners, and equestrians may seek aesthetic relief and enjoyment of views as part of recreational activity. Because assessment of aesthetics is inherently subjective, concerns raised by the public during the scoping process were considered.

Impact assessment of visual character focuses on whether development of the Project would substantially degrade the existing visual character of the Project site or vicinity. Considerations include potential visual contrast and/or the compatibility of scale and character of future development to existing visual conditions.

To evaluate potential Project-related impacts to scenic and visual resources, this analysis employs photosimulations of key structural components of the Project, including the three proposed visitor centers, the aerial tram, the multi-story parking structure, and Condor Canyon, that would be visible from Key Viewing Locations (KVLs). Four (4) KVLs were
identified around the edges of the Project site in publicly accessible areas (Figure 3.1-1). KVLs represent views from public trails and roadways where a clear view of the Project is available and overall quality of the scenic view is moderate to high. The KVL analysis focuses on changes from existing conditions as they would be experienced by motorists, bicyclists, equestrians, pedestrians, and runners. The following four KVLs were selected for analysis.

- **KVL 1: North Trail near Amir's Garden looking northeast.** This KVL represents views of the Project site afforded from public trails in Griffith Park around the Zoo. This KVL was selected because Amir’s Garden is a popular hiking destination and reflects typical views overlooking the interior of the Project site from the south, including its dense urban forest canopy which breaks up or blocks views Zoo facilities. In addition, the KVL provides clear views of more distant scenic resources, including the San Gabriel Mountains and Glendale skyline.

- **KVL 2: Condor Trail north of Zoo looking south.** This KVL represents views into the Project site from the popular Condor Trail. This KVL was selected because it provides one of the closest and clearest views into the interior portions of the Zoo, allowing viewers to discern some key features or development of the Zoo from the north and west.

- **KVL 3: Intersection of Zoo Drive and Western Heritage Way looking southeast.** As a gateway to Griffith Park, this KVL represents one of the first views of the Project site for visitors of the Zoo or its surrounding land uses. The KVL captures views by pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles passing through or stopped at the intersection of Zoo Drive, the Main Trail, and Western Heritage Way from the north and east. This KVL was selected because it provides a clear view across the Zoo parking lot in the foreground towards the Zoo entrance, with natural hillside areas and ridgelines of the Zoo and Griffith Park in the mid- and background. Views of both the Zoo entrance, a majority of the parking lot, and much of Griffith Park are partially obstructed or interrupted by Zoo parking lot trees and landscaping, while views across the Zoo’s northern parking lot are relatively unobstructed. This view captures the visual character of the Zoo Drive gateway as the transition from the urbanized communities outside the park to the open, vegetated, and slower pace within the park.

- **KVL 4: Zoo Drive north of Zoo parking lot looking southwest.** This KVL represents public views of the Project site for motorists, pedestrians, equestrian and bicyclists along Zoo Drive and the Main Trail looking southwest across the Zoo’s northern parking lot in the direction of the Zoo’s interior. This KVL was selected because it provides views of the Project site in the direction of the interior of the Zoo, where most of proposed improvements would occur and depicts how views are largely obstructed by the existing hillside. It also provides open views of the proposed multi-story parking structure.
Los Angeles Zoo
KVL Locations

FIGURE 3.1-1
3.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

To prepare photosimulations of the key Project components, each KVL was photographed as a panoramic base image. 3D models of the proposed California Visitor Center, Africa Visitor Center, Treetops Visitor Center, aerial tram, and multi-level parking structure were constructed in a computer-aided design (CAD) program by the EIR consultant’s licensed architect. The 3D models reflect conceptual details about the structures to simulate the approximate size, bulk, scale, and potential visibility of key major new structures. The models were then placed on a terrain model according to the Project conceptual design plan (refer to Figure 2-4). Existing terrain was also modified to depict the hillside cut required for Condor Canyon in the California planning area. This 3D model was then inserted into the georeferenced base photographs for each KVLs with the intent to show the general location, height, scale, and overall visibility of the key structural features from surrounding public areas.

As described in Section 2.3.6, *Proposed Circulation & Transportation*, the Vision Plan proposes a new multi-story parking structure capable of providing an addition 2,000 parking spaces within approximately 3.3 acres in the northern parking lot based on the conceptual Project design (Figure 2-4); however, the exact design of the parking structure remains conceptual. To estimate the height and scale of this parking structure, a 3-D model was built based on standard parking design metrics, resulting in approximately 410 vehicles per level on 3.3 acres, which would result in 5 stories to provide approximately 2,000 spaces. The siting
of this 3D model was also based on the conceptual plan (Figure 2-4) but assumed that the parking structure was located near the main entrance for access efficiency. Due to programmatic nature of the Vision Plan and lack of detailed building or grading plans, the KVL photosimulations of the Project are conceptual and represent the anticipated design and scale of the Project, including proposed topographic changes, final structure locations, or other design or landscaping specifications. However, the key KVLs provide representative maximum levels of development that would be visible and estimates the potentially required footprints and heights of proposed structures.

The KVL photosimulations inform the assessment of the Project’s potential to substantially degrade or conflict with the existing visual character of the site and Project vicinity. Existing KVL visual characteristics are compared to computer-based visual simulations of key Project elements in Section 3.1.3, Environmental Impact Analysis, below. The analysis focuses on changes from existing conditions as they would be experienced by viewers from adjacent public locations, including roadways around the Zoo and trails in Griffith Park. Given data availability, this assessment of impacts is qualitative, as detailed Project design is not available to support a quantitative analysis of potential changes to visual resources.

**Light and Glare**

Light and glare impact assessment reviews the new light and glare sources that would be introduced under the Project and determines whether light/glare would substantially affect views or viewers in the Project vicinity. A key element in this assessment methodology involves consideration of the existing light and glare standards in the LAMC.

### 3.1.3 Environmental Impact Analysis

**VIS-1: Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?**

The City’s General Plan Conservation Element defines scenic views or vistas as “the panoramic public view access to natural features, including views of the ocean, striking or unusual natural terrain, or unique urban or historic features.” There are areas within Griffith Park surrounding the Project site that provide scenic vistas or vistas due to the expansive, panoramic views of the natural terrain, more distant urban landscapes, and background of the majestic San Gabriel Mountains, although such views and vistas are not officially designated or mapped. The views afforded from public trails within Griffith Park meet the City’s definition of scenic views and thus are considered scenic vistas in this analysis. While existing public roadways such as Zoo Drive, Crystal Springs Road, and Griffith Park Drive offer scenic segments and some views of the Zoo (see Impact VIS-2 below), these generally

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1 The 3D model and photosimulations represent the best available effort to simulate building visibility and general size bulk and scale. However, because the Vision Plan is a long-range conceptual planning document for 20 years of Zoo improvements, detailed architectural drawings, precise building elevations and architectural exterior treatments (e.g., paint colors, trim, architectural details, etc.) were not available.
do not include scenic vistas across the Zoo. The Zoo is most visible and lies within a greater viewshed from specific locations or whole segments of nearby trails, primarily Skyline Trail, Condor Trail, and North Trail.

The Project would have several components that would be visible from scenic vistas within Griffith Park, including from popular hiking trails uphill from the Zoo. Most Project development would be low-lying and hidden within terrain and landscaping, similar to the existing visual setting for the Zoo. Taller structures such as the three proposed visitor centers and the aerial tram would extend above the urban forest canopy within the Zoo, adding structural features not currently visible from surrounding areas. For example, the Treetops Terrace Visitor Center would reconstruct the iconic spires originally designed by architect Charles Luckman in the first Zoo plans (see also, Section 3.4, Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources). These spires were intended to be highly visible as a wayfinding beacon in the original plans and would serve a similar role in the Project. These changes would manifest in the California, Asia, and Africa planning areas in Phases 1, 2, and 3 of Project implementation.

Views of the Zoo from these trails are distant in most locations, and are often obstructed by intervening hillsides, ridgelines, fencing, and both native vegetation and the Zoo’s urban forest canopy. Although the Skyline, Condor, and North Trails provide views over the Zoo from various locations, future development within the Zoo’s interior would not be easily visible due to the dense tree canopy and the location of such development within a canyon bottom or on lower ridgelines surrounded by elevated hillsides and ridgelines.
3.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

Construction

The Project would result in ongoing construction in seven sequential phases over the course of 20 years. Each phase of development would involve varying degrees of vegetation removal and replanting. In this way, the Project would incrementally and temporarily affect the visual quality of the Zoo’s urban forest as viewed from scenic vistas. During construction of a Project phase, vegetation would be modified or removed to clear areas for new development of animal environment, visitor-serving, and Zoo facility spaces. Extensive tree and vegetation removal within both the undeveloped hillside areas in the California and Africa planning areas, as well as throughout existing developed visitor serving and animal environments, would occur. The Project would also result in the construction of several new structures, features, or animal environments. Such activities would involve large-scale grading and excavation for the proposed Condor Canyon and other areas requiring terracing, deeper foundations, and grade changes (e.g., Zoo Entry plaza). These activities, particularly the clearing of trees and vegetation, would be at least partially visible from public trails in some locations and the loss of tree canopy may temporarily open views of existing or planned structures. Further, views of large construction equipment and active construction sites (e.g., large graded areas) may be considered unsightly and partially diminish the visual quality of scenic vistas from surrounding trails. Thus, construction activities would create temporary adverse changes in the existing scenic vistas or views.

However, potentially adverse changes in the quality of scenic vistas across the Zoo from local trails would be short-term. Impacts to scenic vistas or views from vegetation removal and diminishment of the urban forest canopy would also be short term, as the Vision Plan proposes extensive landscaping and tree replanting. Landscaping of affected areas would result in revegetation and regeneration of the visual quality of the area within 5 to 10 years following completion of phase construction. Over the mid to longer term, the urban forest tree canopy would return to conditions similar to the Zoo’s existing setting, limiting, or avoiding permanent changes in the quality of scenic vistas.

Operation

Once operational, the Project’s improvements would be generally hidden within existing or reestablished vegetation and urban forest canopy within the Zoo. Exceptions would be for taller structures that extend above the canopy and into the public view from surrounding trails.
scenic vistas. These structures include the three proposed visitor centers, the aerial tram, and the Condor Canyon hillside cut. These improvements would be visible from adjacent areas of Griffith Park and potentially obstruct or alter scenic vistas or views from as the Condor, Skyline or North Trails.

Based on visual simulations for proposed structures prepared by a licensed architect, Project implementation would not substantially adversely affect scenic vistas or views from trails in Griffith Park.² Despite the addition of several taller structures or features, such as the reconstructed Treetops Visitor Center and the aerial tram and associated towers, existing distant views of Griffith Park or urban environment from surrounding trails would not be substantially altered or intruded into. For instance, from KVL 1 near Amir’s Garden, the proposed Treetops Visitor Center, aerial tram, and the California Visitor Center in the distance would be visible but largely set into the existing topography and urban forest tree cover within the Zoo. From this KVL, the Africa Visitor Center would lie below the ridgeline. Views from KVL 2 also would be slightly altered, but again changes to scenic vistas would be minimal. Proposed structures would blend into the Zoo topography and urban forest landscape and would not substantially intrude into or interrupt more distant scenic vistas. Further, reconstruction of the Treetops Visitor Center spires, which were a prominent historic feature of the Zoo, may bring aesthetic and cultural value to these views by restoring an iconic and historic feature to the viewshed. Because these scenic vistas are more distant and higher in elevation than the Zoo, obstruction, or interference of views by proposed development would be minimal, and scenic vistas of distant prominent features would not be substantially altered. Overall, the Project would have a less than significant impact on existing scenic views and vistas.

² The white color of simulated structures is due to the limited information on detailed architectural treatment; white also increases the visibility of planned structures in the photosimulations, allowing for a “worst case” assessment of visual changes.
3.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

KVL 1: Mid-range views of the Project site from the North Trail near Amir’s Garden would be incrementally altered by Project construction (pictured). Views from this KVL of the Zoo’s interior, namely the Gottlieb Animal Health and Conservation Center and Treetops Visitor Center would remain substantially unchanged. Views into much of the Zoo’s interior are limited by the south-facing ridgeline above the Africa planning area existing vegetation and the Zoo’s dense urban forest canopy obscure both existing and proposed new structures. More scenic, distant views beyond the Zoo of the San Gabriel Mountains and the City of Glendale skyline from this KVL would not be interrupted or substantially altered by new structures. Planned new structures would incrementally change these views as the aerial tram and the reconstructed Treetops Terrace would rise above the urban forest canopy. However, these new structures would generally be subordinate to the surrounding topography and urban forest would not result in the loss or obstruction of mid-range or distant views of the San Gabriel Mountains or Glendale skyline.
KVL 2: Scenic Vistas and mid-range views from the Skyline Trail of the interior of the Zoo, including the undeveloped California planning area hillside, the Angela Collier World of Birds Theater, and the Condor East facility would be incrementally affected by new construction. More distant views of the San Gabriel Mountains to the northeast, the Glendale skyline to the east, and natural hillsides and ridgelines of Griffith Park to the southeast would not be blocked or substantially interrupted by new structures. However, development of the interior portions of the Zoo would be somewhat more visible from this KVL. For instance, prominent new development visible from this location of the Skyline Trail would include the aerial tram, Treetops Visitor Center, and the substantial hillside cut for the proposed Condor Canyon. Nevertheless, these improvements would remain subordinate to local topography and the urban forest canopy and distant scenic vistas would not be interrupted. Therefore, changes in scenic vistas and views are not anticipated to substantially alter the visual experience of trail users from this trail.
3.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

VIS-2: Would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

The Project would substantially change the existing visual character of the interior of the Zoo, particularly through substantial short-term vegetation removal and modifications to the urban forest canopy and grading. Proposed interior improvements to the Zoo would not change the existing zoning and would not conflict with applicable regulations governing scenic quality. Given that there are no designated scenic highways or residences within or near the Project site, the City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan and LAMC Lighting Requirements do not apply to the proposed Project (see also Impact VIS-3 for further discussion of light and glare impacts). The Project would also modify the existing visual character of exterior public areas fronting the Zoo, including the Zoo Drive gateway to Griffith Park, through roadway, intersection, and parking improvements, including construction of a new multi-story parking structure that would be visible from Zoo Drive. These visual changes would affect public visual resources to a degree that would cause a conflict with the City’s General Plan Conservation Element, Framework Element, 1988 Hollywood Community Plan, and Griffith Park Vision Plan, as further discussed herein and in Section 3.11, Land Use and Planning (refer to Impact LU-1 for detailed analysis of Project consistency with applicable regulations governing scenic quality).

Changes Within the Zoo Property

The Project would facilitate redevelopment of the Zoo, as well as the expansion of visitor-serving and animal environment space into approximately 25 acres of existing undeveloped areas characterized mainly by vegetated ridges and hillsides. Given the existing developed nature of the site as a Zoo, proposed development would not drastically change the character of the Zoo. The Zoo would remain a Zoo with rich animal environments and lively, engaging visitor areas. Development would remain low density and integrated with lush, diverse landscaping. The Project would modernize existing Zoo facilities to become more visually consistent and interesting. Further, expansions into undeveloped areas within the Zoo would develop unique and visually desirable facilities, particularly within the California and Africa planning areas where two modern visitor centers would be developed, set amongst engaging animal environments, walking paths, and wayfinding signage.
The greatest change in visual character within internal areas of the Project site would result from temporary removal of substantial areas of the urban forest (e.g., mixed eucalyptus woodland; specimen trees), grading and terrain reshaping to recreate animal environments and visitor amenities such as Condor Canyon, and construction on undeveloped hillsides within the California and Africa planning areas. Visual changes would occur incrementally and sequentially over seven phases of development through 2040. Each phase of development would entail closure of an area of the Zoo using fencing and signage to prevent public access. As a result, construction, including equipment, demolition, and vegetation removal, would not be highly visible to the public within the Zoo. Incidental views of the construction would potentially occur as Zoo patrons move long walkways, ride the aerial or ground trams, and visit new and remodeled animal environments, but these effects would be temporary and minor. Further, these changes to the interior of the Zoo would not be highly visible from outside of the Zoo (refer to Impact VIS-1).

Visual changes from loss of vegetation and tree canopy would potentially be inconsistent with the City’s General Plan Conservation Element, Framework Element, and 1998 Hollywood Community Plan goals and policies to retain significant landforms, unique scenic features, and natural viewsheds. However, extensive new landscaping and tree replanting throughout the Zoo would maintain and expand the dense urban forest present within the Zoo’s interior over the long term, which would maintain and improve the existing visual character of the site. As described in Section 3.6, Urban Forestry Resources, changes to existing trees and vegetation would be substantial, but the Project would include replanting mature vegetation, trees, and landscaping for each phase throughout the Zoo similar to the existing condition. This impact is further mitigated with preservation in place or replacement of mature trees as part of Project landscaping with implementation of MM UF-1 and MM UF-2. These measures would also ensure regeneration of the visual quality of the Zoo as a rich, urban forest canopy and lush landscape, further ensuring that impacts to visual character within the Zoo and associated impacts to policy consistency would be less than significant with mitigation.

The features that would be visible through the tree canopy would not substantially alter visual character or aesthetic quality of the site. Instead, proposed development may incrementally transition undeveloped portions of the site to developed Zoo facilities, set in lush, landscaped grounds. This transition would be consistent with the existing character of the Zoo and would support long-term improvements to that character and history as an iconic, modern Zoo (see also, Section 3.4, Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources). With
completion and operation of all seven phases of the development, the Project would have a beneficial effect on the visual character and quality of the Zoo, particularly as vegetation installed as part of landscape plans becomes mature and reestablishes the urban forest within the Zoo. Much of the existing development within the Zoo is antiquated, and due to gradual redevelopment of the Zoo over the years, has resulted in a built environment that does not share a consistent aesthetic theme or design. The Project would guide development uniformity in design of proposed improvements, along with planned improvements to landscaping and the urban forest would improve the quality of design and visual character of the Zoo’s interior areas as viewed by Zoo patrons over the long term. Therefore, with landscaping and mitigation to preserve and replant trees, interior improvements within the Zoo would be consistent with applicable policies governing scenic quality from the Conservation Element, Framework Element, 1998 and the Hollywood Community Plan.

The Project would also result in major changes in the visual character of the Zoo Drive gateway to Griffith Park the construction of a new multi-story parking structure in the northern parking lot on Zoo property (Figure 2-4 and Figure 2-14). Although no conceptual plans are available, preliminary review indicates such a structure would be approximately five stories in height with a footprint of approximately three acres if no subterranean levels were included. This structure would accommodate the 2,000 spaces proposed in the Vision Plan. This proposed multi-story parking structure would be highly visible from Zoo Drive, Western Heritage Way, and the main entrance to the Zoo (see KVL-3 and KVL-4 below). This structure would substantially change the character of Zoo Drive gateway fronting the Zoo from an open, tree-lined surface parking lot with clear views of vegetated hillsides to a large, bulky parking structure dominating and blocking views of surrounding features. Development of the parking structure may be inconsistent with Conservation Element, Framework Element, 1998 Hollywood Community Plan, and Griffith Park Vision Plan goals and policies to retain views from public areas of the natural topography and character of Griffith Park, including views of ridge lines and mountains, and natural resources, such as trees.
3.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

KVL 3: Views from North Zoo Drive at the intersection of Zoo Drive and Western Heritage Way towards the Project site and across the northern parking lot include a backdrop of natural undeveloped hillsides and are partially interrupted by existing street trees and parking lot landscaping; the interior of the Zoo is not visible from this location. Under the proposed Project, the existing visual quality and character of the Project site could be substantially altered and adversely affected through construction of a parking structure in the northern parking lot estimated to be 5 stories tall. Such a parking structure would be potentially visually incompatible with the Zoo and surrounding area and conflict with policies for the Zoo Drive Gateway to Griffith Park.
3.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

KVL 4: Views from Zoo Drive between the row of trees are available across the Zoo’s northern parking lot of the natural hillside east of the parking lot and more distant peaks within Griffith Park. Under the Project almost ½ of the roughly 5 acres northern parking lot would be utilized for construction of a 2,000-space parking structure of approximately 5 stories in height on the western portion of the lot. This new structure would obstruct views of the natural hillside, and would be one of the largest structures in Griffith Park, substantially changing the character of the area as viewed from the Zoo Drive Gateway.
To buffer the proposed structure, the Project includes a 2-acre park between the parking structure and Zoo Drive and conceptual plans depict a triple line of trees adjacent to the structure along with major tree planting within the proposed public park and the remaining northern surface parking lot and along Zoo Drive (refer to Figure 2-4). However, details regarding the design of these improvements, proposed in Phase 7, are not known. In addition, as no parking structures exist within Griffith Park, this structure would be the tallest structure in Griffith Park, and the size, bulk, and scale of the structure may be visually inconsistent with surrounding development within Griffith Park. Additionally, the proposed parking structure would obstruct views of the natural hillside area to the west (see KVL 4) and potentially disrupt the viewer experience for travelers entering or traversing Griffith Park, substantially altering the aesthetic and expectation of views from Zoo Drive and Western Heritage Way and from adjacent trailheads to Condor and Skyline Trails. The size, bulk, and scale of the proposed parking structure could also detract from the aesthetic of the Zoo’s main entry.

The Griffith Park Vision Plan states that parking structures are inconsistent with the Park’s wilderness identity and that associated increased vehicular traffic may damage the park-like nature of adjacent picnic areas and recreational facilities; the Plan recommends that no new parking structures should be introduced within the boundaries of the Park. However, the Griffith Park Vision Plan does not apply to Zoo owned property as the Zoo was not a party to the Griffith Park Vision planning process and the Zoo Commission has not adopted the Griffith Park Vision Plan. The Griffith Park Vision Plan, itself, states that it does not apply to the Zoo property because RAP has no jurisdiction over the Zoo property, including the Zoo parking lot, and it further states that the vision, planning, and decision-making process for the property is independent of RAP since it is operated and controlled by the Zoo Department (RAP 2013). While implementation of the proposed parking structure would substantially alter the visual character of the Zoo’s main entry, it would be developed within Zoo property and, therefore, would not conflict with the Griffith Park Vision Plan.
3.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

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KVL 3 (above) and KVL 4 (below), (Post-Mitigation): The KVLs depicted here represents a possible design of the parking structure with implementation of MM VIS-2 under a 5-10 year post-development condition, where landscaping and screening vegetation provide visual shielding of the relocated, down-scaled parking structure. Implementation of proposed mitigation would result in a reduction in the size, bulk, and scale of the proposed parking structure, while proposed landscaping along the exterior of the structure in accordance with MM VIS-2, as well as landscaping within the parking lot, would help to reduce visual obtrusion by blending the structure with surrounding vegetation.
However, the proposed parking structure would be highly visible for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians traveling through the Zoo Drive gateway to Griffith Park (KVL 3). Implementation of MM VIS-2 would require the parking structure to be redesigned to reduce structure height and visibility of the parking structure to the extent feasible to help maintain the visual aesthetic and viewer experience of Griffith Park, including the Zoo Drive gateway, which may include design of the parking structure to be partially subterranean and/or shielded to reduce visibility of the structure. However, if subterranean levels for the parking structure are infeasible, alternative design may involve a larger structure within a greater building footprint. Based on architectural review and the intent of providing for an additional 2,000 parking spaces, such a design may result in development of a 3-story, above ground structure across the entirety of the Zoo’s northern parking lot. Such a design would result in a reduced structure height but would result in development of an approximately 30-foot tall structure along much of the Zoo’s boundary with Zoo Drive. Such a design could reasonably result in a channelized view corridor obstructing passer-by views of Griffith Park, particularly when considered along with proposed at-grade intersection improvements at Zoo Drive/Western Heritage Way, which may create greater impacts to aesthetics as a result of increased size, bulk, and scale (see below). This mitigated structure would remain large, tall, and bulky, conflicting with the existing visual character and policies to maintain the Zoo Drive gateway in a wilderness setting. However, the mitigated structure would preserve views of the natural topography in the background and the landscaped tree buffer would retain views of natural resources. Therefore, with proposed landscaping and reduced height under MM VIS-2, the proposed parking structure would be substantially consistent with visual resource policies of the Conservation Element, Framework Element, and 1998 Hollywood Community Plan policies to retain views of the natural ridge lines and trees. Therefore, implementation of the proposed improvements within the Zoo property would be consistent with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality. See Section 3.11, Land Use and Planning, for further discussion of the proposed Project’s consistency with applicable zoning and land use regulations.

Changes Outside of the Zoo Property

Proposed improvements outside of the Zoo property would substantially change the urban wilderness character of the Zoo Drive gateway area and may affect viewsheds of natural topography and resources across the park to the west and south. The improvements combined with the proposed multi-story parking structure discussed above would compound changes to visual character of the gateway. Project elements outside of the Zoo property that would be most visible to visitors to Griffith Park and affect the visual character of areas surrounding the Zoo would include roadway and circulation improvements, including the following proposals:

- intersection improvements at the Zoo Drive and main entrance-Western Heritage Way intersection with potentially a traffic signal, roundabout, or a below-grade crossing; and
• realignment of Crystal Springs Drive and a short segment of Western Heritage Way.

These envisioned improvements would collectively affect visual character of the Zoo and Griffith Park as viewed from adjacent roads and trails (refer to Figures 2-4 and 2-16). The improvements would affect North Zoo Drive, Zoo Drive, and Crystal Springs Drive, identified as gateways to Griffith Park under the Griffith Park Vision Plan. Such changes in visual character would be both adverse and beneficial, as further described below.

The proposed Vision Plan presents three options for improving traffic flows and reducing or eliminating vehicle queueing at the congested Zoo Drive/Western Heritage Way/Zoo entrance intersection: 1) installation of traffic signals, 2) a roundabout, or 3) a below-grade crossing of Zoo Drive, allowing Western Heritage Way to pass under a new bridge (Figure 2-14). Signalization would occur during Phase 1 of the Project and, if needed, either a roundabout or below-grade crossing would replace the intersection in Phase 7. Installation of traffic signals or a roundabout would not substantially alter existing visual character of this intersection in context of the Zoo or Griffith Park, although roundabout construction may require expansion outside of existing paved roadways and removal of mature eucalyptus, western sycamore, and other trees. Alternately, new bridge construction and an on- and off-ramp configuration for access between Zoo Drive, North Zoo Drive, and Western Heritage Way would require extensive grading and removal of a substantial number of existing street trees and roadside vegetation. Short-term construction impacts on visual character would be substantial as dozens of trees would likely be removed and such construction would also extend over a period of two or more years. Improvements would likely extend into Zoo and Autry Museum of the American West parking lots, eliminating or substantially altering existing landscaping and mature trees.

If installed, the grade-change and interchange improvement at Zoo Drive/Western Heritage Way would dramatically transform the visual character of this intersection and entrance to the Zoo, as well as the Zoo Drive gateway to Griffith Park. Travelers entering from North Zoo Drive would proceed over the new bridge to the Zoo parking lot, while those accessing Zoo Drive or Western Heritage Way would use an on- and off-ramp system with those proceeding along Zoo Drive and Western Heritage Way would pass under a new bridge. This envisioned infrastructure project would dramatically change this travel corridor, from what currently feels visually like a “country road” with a 4-way stop to a concrete interchange with dramatic terrain modification. The improvement would alleviate congestion at the intersection, which is the intent of the Project in Phase 7, but would increase travel speeds and separate travelers...
from views of the Zoo Drive gateway and the Zoo entrance, potentially diminishing the sense of arrival currently afforded by the local roadways, open sky views, and iconic Zoo entrance sign setback from the street. The visual character of the adjacent Main Trail could also be altered due to vegetation removal and users may experience increased noise and exposure to traffic. While the roundabout or grade change, bridge and interchange option may have long-term visual benefits, because plans are entirely conceptual, the potential remains for significant visual impacts to community character. Therefore, these improvements outside of Zoo property would conflict with the goals and policies of the Conservation Element, Framework Element, 1998 Hollywood Community Plan, and Griffith Park Vision Plan to maintain the wilderness character of Griffith Park and the Zoo Drive gateway, as well as views of ridgelines, vegetation, and iconic structures.

Project implementation would also include realignment of approximately 1,200 feet of Western Heritage Way and Crystal Springs Drive to pass east and south of Zoo open storage areas in the southern parking lot along an existing 15+ foot-wide service road, which is a continuation of Western Heritage Way south of the Zoo Magnet Center, then rejoining the existing alignment of Crystal Springs Road (refer to Figure 2-15). This realignment may require widening of this road from its current 15+ feet to the typical 30 to 35-foot cross section of Crystal Springs Drive. Although no conceptual designs are available, realignment of this road could potentially impact dozens of roadside trees, diminishing the rural visual character of an adjacent park trail that would become exposed to vehicular traffic, similar to that associated within its southward continuation along Crystal Springs Drive. However, the visual character of the realigned roadway would be similar or improved as the Zoo southern parking to the north is proposed for major new landscaping and the Wilson and Harding Golf Course, which lies to the south, would provide visual relief. However, uncertainty over design, potential for tree removal and impacts to views from the existing trail may create potentially significant impacts to community character.

For Project elements occurring in the public right of way, MM VIS-1 would ensure the Zoo Drive/Western Heritage Way intersection improvements would be designed to maximize visual compatibility with Griffith Park and the Zoo entrance and retain the wilderness identity of the park. MM VIS-1 would require intersection improvements to be designed with stone or other natural materials and sized consistent with surrounding structures and facilities in Griffith Park to the extent feasible, as well as incorporating iconic design elements, signage, and art/decorations that reflect the gateway to both the Zoo and Griffith Park. Even with these required mitigation measures, the visual changes proposed would be substantial and would not be consistent with the visual character of the Zoo Drive gateway and existing Zoo entrance or the urban wilderness identity of Griffith Park, as defined in the Griffith Park Vision Plan. For example, intersection improvements would substantially alter the Zoo Drive gateway, creating a more urban, engineered intersection with increased speeds, which would continue to substantially change the visual character of the Griffith Park Zoo Drive gateway area. Consequently, with mitigation, the proposed intersection and roadway improvements outside
of Zoo property, with the compounding effect of the proposed parking structure within the Zoo that would be visible from these roadways, would not be consistent with the Conservation Element, Framework Element, 1998 Hollywood Community Plan, and Griffith Park Vision Plan goals and policies to retain viewsheds of topography and natural resources (e.g., trees) and preserve the urban wilderness identity of Griffith Park and the Zoo Drive gateways. Therefore, the Project’s proposed exterior circulation improvements would not be consistent with applicable regulations governing scenic quality, and impacts would be significant and unavoidable. See Section 3.11, Land Use and Planning, for further discussion of the proposed Project’s consistency with applicable zoning and land use regulations.

**VIS-3:** Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area?

**Construction**

The Project would result in ongoing construction in seven sequential phases over the course of 20 years. Each phase of development would entail closure of an area of the Zoo using fencing and signage to prevent public access. As a result, construction, including equipment that may be a source of light and glare, would not be highly visible to the public within the Zoo during operating hours of 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. Light and glare from the construction within the interior of the Zoo would not be highly visible from outside of the Zoo given intervening topography, vegetation, and distance (refer to Impact VIS-1). Incidental exposure to construction lights and glare from equipment and materials within closed portion of the Zoo would potentially occur as Zoo patrons move long walkways, ride the aerial or ground trams, and visit new and remodeled animal environments, but these effects would be temporary and minor during the day. Further, any construction activities requiring night lighting would be contained within the closed area of the Zoo and would occur when the Zoo was closed. Therefore, nighttime lighting would be localized and not perceived by the public and construction impacts related to light and glare would be less than significant. Nighttime light effects on wildlife and Zoo animals is discussed in Section 3.3, Biological Resources.
3.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

**Operation**

New sources of lighting under the Project would include lighting in new structures, safety lighting of the aerial tram, and parking lot, roadway, and pathway lighting, as well as nighttime security lighting of Zoo service areas and administrative facilities. Griffith Park is open from 5:00 AM to 10:30 PM daily, which allows visitors in the park after dark to use park facilities, including trails near the Project site. Most new lighting sources would not be highly visible from the outside of the Zoo due to the hillsides, vegetation, perimeter fencing and the Zoo’s urban forest obstructing views into the Zoo (see also, Impact VIS-1). However, the proposed California and Africa planning areas constructed on the Zoo’s higher elevations would support structures with night lighting that could be seen from distant vistas described by KVA-1 and KVA-2 above. The proposed aerial tram would also hover above vegetation and structures within the Zoo with security lights potentially visible at night from these locations. The Project would also increase the frequency of nighttime events, which may involve lighting after the Zoo has closed. Further, reflective materials used in the aerial tram or visitor centers (e.g., view windows) could potentially catch sunlight during the day and project glare toward the public trail overlooks in Griffith Park.

**Light Effects**

The most visible new lighting on the Project site would be from parking lot security and roadway lighting in the public areas fronting the Zoo. As described in Impact VIS-2, this area is a designated gateway to Griffith Park where increased lighting may diminish visual quality in the area. The existing main parking lot is currently lit with hooded lighting to direct light down and prevent spill over into wilderness area of the Griffith Park; this type and extent of lighting would persist under the Project, including the proposed multi-story parking structure. While additional lighting may be inconsistent with visual character of the area, as address in Impact VIS-2, the additional lighting itself would not dominate surrounding roadways, as the
additional lighting would be hooded and directed downward similar to lighting that currently occurs at the Zoo.

The Project would also increase the frequency and projected attendance of special events held at the Zoo, potentially requiring longer durations of nighttime lighting prior to Zoo daily shutdown. Events may be held in proposed hilltop visitor centers in the California and Africa planning areas, which may be visible from public views in Griffith Park. However, lighting used during such events would be internal to the Zoo and, as noted in Impact VIS-1 above, such special event lighting visibility from within the Zoo would highly limited due to distance from viewing points and intervening trees and vegetation.

The Zoo is not visible from nearby communities in the City, Glendale, or Burbank and, therefore, would not be affected by Project lighting or glare. Residential communities outside of Griffith Park in proximity to the Zoo are separated from the Zoo by approximately 3 miles and intervening hillsides, the Los Angeles River, and travel corridors of SR 134 and I-5 which provide lighting for traveling vehicles, completely block views of the Zoo. Therefore, additional lights sources at the Zoo would not adversely impact sensitive residential communities surrounding the Zoo. Uses surrounding the Zoo that have the potential to observe Project lighting include the Autry Museum of the American West and the Wilson and Harding Golf Course. However, the Autry Museum closes at 4:00 PM, and therefore, no visitors or staff would be impacted by current or future nighttime lighting occurring at the Zoo. The Wilson and Harding Golf Course closes at 10:00 PM; therefore, visitors and staff may detect night lighting at the Zoo. However, lighting from the Zoo is not anticipated to create a nuisance to the Wilson and Harding Golf Course, as the golf course is located behind a Zoo ridgeline in the Africa planning area, which would block views of lighting within the Zoo and the parking lots. Further, the golf course provides substantial lighting at its driving range and parking lot so that visitors may continue their activities after sundown. Other facilities in Griffith Park that may be sensitive to night lighting include the Griffith Observatory and the Greek Theater. However, the natural topography of Griffith Park includes a large hillside that divide these areas from one another, thereby obstructing direct views and minimizing potential light spillover.

Zoo lighting would comply with LAMC Section 93.0117, which limits the amount of exterior light intensity on surrounding areas and requires parking lot lighting to face away from streets and residences. Increased lighting would be substantially visible to surrounding uses or cause impacts to Zoo visitors. Therefore, light impacts from the Project would be less than significant.

Glare Effects

The Project would potentially create sources of glare from bright or reflective surfaces. Given the programmatic nature of the Vision Plan, detailed designs of proposed improvements, including specifications on building materials and architectural coatings or treatment are not available. Based on the proposed conceptual design and visual simulations, several proposed
new structures would be visible from higher-elevation trails located in the Project vicinity. For example, the larger developments proposed in Phases 1 through 3 such as the California and Treetops Visitors centers and the aerial tramway towers, would be visible from public trails (see KVL 1 and 2 above). These structures and features may be constructed or designed with some reflective surfaces (e.g., large windows, polished surfaces) or architectural surfacing that may reflect light during certain hours of the day. Glare may be reflected from proposed hilltop visitor centers in the California and Africa planning areas, which may be visible from public views in Griffith Park. However, as noted in Impact VIS-1 above, views of these areas would highly limited due to distance from viewing points and intervening trees and vegetation. Even if some degree of glare results, these structures would only be visible in the distance from public trails and viewpoints within Griffith Park. Due to the Zoo’s dense urban forest, the intermittent duration of views from pedestrians along the trails, distance of the views, and anticipated lack of large reflective surfaces or features, most Project development would not generate significant impacts from glare.

However, one proposed feature has the potential to generate substantial new glare. The proposed aerial tram would be an elevated structure rising above the Zoo’s urban forest canopy and visible from adjacent public trails in Griffith Park (see KVLs 1 and 2 above). Though the specific materials are not known, aerial tram gondolas are typically constructed with large, rounded glass panels to allow 360° views for riders or may include other reflective features that could generate glare. The glare generated from the gondolas could create a nuisance and distract from the scenic views overlooking the Zoo. Implementation of MM VIS-3 would require the Zoo utilize tram gondolas that would have matte finishing and earth tone colors to blend with the landscape and reduce or eliminate substantial glare. In addition, the measure would require all glass features of the gondolas to use non-reflective glass or film covers to reduce reflectivity. With implementation of this mitigation measure, Project impacts from generation of glare would be less than significant with mitigation.

3.1.4 Mitigation Measures

The following measure is identified to address impacts of the Project resulting from changes in the visual quality and character of the site and from generation of glare visible from public areas of Griffith Park.

**MM UF-1 and MM UF-2 shall apply.**

**MM VIS-1 Roadway and Parking Lot Improvement Design**

Improvements to the intersection of Zoo Drive/North Zoo Drive/Western Heritage Way and the main Zoo entrance, Zoo parking lots, and the realignment of Crystal Springs Drive shall be designed to respect and enhance the visual quality and natural character of Griffith Park, especially designated gateways to Griffith Park as follows:
A licensed landscape architect experienced with road and infrastructure design within highly scenic parks shall be part of any design team and charged with maintaining and enhancing visual quality and natural character the public spaces fronting the Zoo, including the parking, roadways, intersections and trails.

For improvements at the intersection of Zoo Drive/North Zoo Drive/Western Heritage Way and the main Zoo entrance, major structural changes, including but not limited to a new bridge, below-grade crossing, and slip ramps or a roundabout, a licensed architect experienced with road and infrastructure design within highly scenic parks shall be part of any design team and charged with creating a scenic and iconic gateway feature, including:

- Use of stone or other natural materials consistent with surrounding structures and facilities in Griffith Park.
- Minimize size, bulk, scale of structures to the extent feasible while also adhering to required engineering standards for safety and operations.
- Installation of iconic design elements, signage, and art/decorations (e.g., emblematic animals or habitats, sculpture, topiary/vegetation, water feature) that reflect the gateway to both the Zoo and Griffith Park such that the bridge or roundabout become beneficial visual features.

All improvements to access roads and intersections shall be designed to preserve existing vegetation, particularly healthy mature trees, and characteristic park features (e.g., split rail fences), and to protect views from these roads and adjacent trails.

As part of design of these road and intersection improvement projects, a master landscape plan shall be prepared to guide tree and landscape retention and protection along these road corridors along with tree replanting and replacement landscaping.

The Zoo shall coordinate with RAP on design of all road and intersection improvements, and parking lot perimeter plantings.

**MM VIS-2 Parking Structure Design and Screening**

The proposed parking structure shall be designed in such a manner as to limit size, bulk, and scale and to reduce visibility of this new parking structure. The goal for redesign of the parking structure should be reduce the structure height as much as possible. Possible ways to reduce impacts of views of the structure from adjacent roadways and public areas may include:

- Siting the parking structure in the far western corner of the parking lot as far from Zoo Drive as possible;
- Design of the structure to a height no greater than three stories above grade with development of additional subterranean construction levels as necessary to achieve the intended number of new parking spaces;
- Screening of the structure through planting of dense stands of trees and landscaping around the exterior of the structure;
- Installation of lattices or climbing vines along the exterior of the structure and;
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- Use of natural materials (e.g., stone facing) or earth-tone colors to reduce the urban character of the structure.

Proposed plans for the parking structure shall demonstrate screening and compatible design with Griffith Park and the intended goal of reducing structure height to the extent feasible. If the design of the structure within the proposed footprint identified in the Vision Plan and with a reduced structure height is determined to be infeasible due to cost or other environmental factors (e.g., shallow groundwater), redesign of the structure to achieve a reduced structure height may include consideration of a design of a structure within a larger footprint and no subterranean levels. All plans for the proposed parking structure shall be subject to review and approval by the City Bureau of Engineering and Cultural Affairs Commission prior to approval of permits.

**MM VIS-3 Aerial Tram Glare Reduction**

The proposed aerial tram support structures and gondolas shall have matte-finishing and painted with earth-tone colors to blend with the landscape. All glass features of the gondolas shall utilize non-reflective or low-reflectivity glass or film covers to avoid any potential for glare. Requirements for the use of no or low reflective materials shall be indicated on all plans for the aerial tram and be subject to review and approval by City Bureau of Engineering prior to approval of permits.

3.1.5 Impacts Summary

With implementation of MM UF-1, MM UF-2, MM VIS-1, MM VIS-2, and MM VIS-3 to reduce impacts to the visual character and glare from the proposed aerial tram, Impacts VIS-1 and VIS-3 would be reduced to less than significant. While it may be possible to partially or largely obscure views of the structure from surrounding roads and public trails, the construction of a 3-acre parking structure of approximately five stories in height would alter and substantially degrade the visual character and quality of key gateway roads into the Park through loss of openness of views and intrusion of a major structure of incompatible size, bulk, and scale with surrounding open space and development. If the structure were developed within a larger footprint in order to achieve a reduce structure height, it is possible the structure could be developed nearer to the public roadways which could continue to degrade the viewer’s experience of Griffith Park and disrupt views from public areas. Even partial subterranean construction would not fully reduce these impacts. However, the Griffith Park Vision Plan does not apply to Zoo property and implementation of the proposed parking structure would not conflict with any other applicable regulations governing scenic quality.

For Impact VIS-2, no feasible mitigation measures are available to fully address the potential impacts associated with the change in visual character of the Zoo Drive gateway into Griffith Park and associated conflicts with the Griffith Park Vision Plan. Combined with reengineering of the Zoo Drive/Western Heritage Way intersection as either a roundabout or below-grade crossing, which would substantially change landscaping and character of the gateway roads,
the overall character of this public area would be transformed from a rural entryway to the Griffith Park wilderness areas to a more urbanized and developed, automobile-focused area. These changes would conflict with Therefore, while most impacts on aesthetics and visual resources would be less than significant with mitigation, overall impacts to aesthetics and visual resources from Impact VIS-2 due to the proposed improvements to the Zoo Drive/Western Heritage Way intersection (e.g., signalization, roundabout, below-grade crossing) and realignment of Western Heritage Way would remain significant and unavoidable.