3.1 Aesthetics

This chapter describes the aesthetic setting in and around the proposed Project (Project) area, and analyzes the potential for impacts on aesthetic resources to result from implementation of the Project. Potential impacts are evaluated with respect to existing scenic views, visual character, and applicable planning policies for aesthetic resources. The Project impacts were evaluated for significance in accordance with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and the L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide (2006). Mitigation measures, where appropriate, are recommended to avoid or substantially lessen significant aesthetic impacts.

3.1.1 Regulatory Setting

This section describes existing laws and regulations related to aesthetics that are applicable to the Project.

3.1.1.1 Federal

Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties

Pursuant to the authority granted in the National Historic Preservation Act, the Secretary of the Interior (SOI) has established a series of professional standards and guidance for the preservation of the nation’s historic properties. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings (SOI Standards) address four concepts: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction of historic properties. The SOI has also prepared advisory guidelines that offer general design and technical recommendations to assist in applying the Standards, including those that would be most relevant to the Project. These include the Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes. Together the SOI’s Standards and guidelines provide a framework and guidance for decision-making and work or changes to a historic property. Further discussion of the SOI Standards and guidelines and their application to the Project is provided in the Chapter 3.4, Cultural Resources.

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) recognizes properties that are significant at the national, state, and local levels. To be eligible for listing in the NRHP, a property must be significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture under one or more of the criterion. Further discussion of the NRHP is provided in Chapter 3.4, Cultural Resources.

3.1.1.2 State

California Department of Transportation Scenic Highways Program

California’s Scenic Highway Program was created by the Legislature in 1963. Its purpose is to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors through special conservation treatment. The California Streets and Highways Code, Division 1, Sections 260–263 implement the Scenic Highway Program. A highway may be designated scenic...
depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler’s enjoyment of the view. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) defines a State Scenic Highway as any freeway, highway, road, or other public right-of-way that traverses an area of exceptional scenic quality. Eligibility for designation as a State Scenic Highway is based on vividness, intactness, and unity of the roadway. The status of a proposed State Scenic Highway changes from eligible to officially designated when the local governing body applies to Caltrans for scenic highway approval, adopts a Corridor Protection Program, and receives notification that the highway has been officially designated a State Scenic Highway. There is one officially designated State Scenic Highway within the City of Los Angeles (City) boundaries, SR 27 (Topanga Canyon Boulevard) between Pacific Coast Highway and Mulholland Drive. There is one Designated Historic Parkway, the Arroyo Seco (SR 110). There are five additional segments of highways within the City that are eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway under the Caltrans State Scenic Highways Program: SR 118 (Simi Valley Freeway) west of DeSoto Avenue to the western City Limits, I-5 north of SR 210 to northern City limits, SR 210 in Sylmar/Sunland-Tujunga to eastern City limits, US Highway 1: Pacific Coast Highway north of I-10 within City limits, and US 101 west of Topanga Canyon Boulevard to the western City limits.

California Coastal Act

The California Coastal Act of 1976 (Coastal Act) was adopted after state voters approved Proposition 20 in 1972. A key factor that led to the passage of this landmark legislation was the visible deterioration of the coastal environment as well as development pressures from a growing population (California Coastal Act 2014). Section 30251 of the Coastal Act is pertinent to visual resources preservation, stating that:

[S]cenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas. New development in highly scenic areas such as those designated in the California Coastline Preservation and Recreation Plan prepared by the Department of Parks and Recreation and by local government shall be subordinate to the character of its setting.

The Coastal Act is discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.9, Land Use.

California Register of Historical Resources

“Historical resources” include any resource listed or determined eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR). Properties listed or determined eligible for listing in the NRHP, such as those identified in the Section 106 process, are automatically listed in the CRHR pursuant to Title 14, Section 4851, subdivision (a)(1) of the California Code of Regulations. Therefore, all historic properties under federal preservation law are automatically historical resources under state preservation law. Historical resources are also presumed to be significant if they are included in a local register of historical resources or identified as significant in a qualified historical resource survey. Properties that are part of the CRHR within the City are listed by the City at https://preservation.lacity.org/survey-la-findings-and-reports. Further discussion of historical resources is provided in the Chapter 3.4, Cultural Resources.
3.1.1.3 Local

City of Los Angeles General Plan

The City General Plan is a comprehensive, long-range declaration of purposes, policies, and programs for the development of the City. The City’s General Plan includes the Framework Element, Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles – Health and Wellness Element, Housing Element, Mobility Element (i.e., Mobility Plan 2035), Noise Element, Air Quality Element, Conservation Element, Open Space Element, Safety Element, and Service Systems Element/Public Recreation Plan. These elements provide long-range Citywide policy and direction and consider Citywide goals and needs.

The Conservation Element, adopted in 2001, includes a discussion of the existing landforms and scenic vistas in the City. Objectives, policies, and programs included in this element are intended to ensure the protection of natural terrain and landforms, unique site features, scenic highways, and panoramic public views as City staff and decision-makers consider future land use development and infrastructure projects. The Mobility Plan 2035, adopted in 2016, provides an inventory of City-designated scenic highways and includes special controls for protection and enhancement of scenic resources. The Mobility Plan 2035 includes Scenic Highway Guidelines for those designated scenic highways for which there is no adopted scenic corridor plan. A complete list of City-designated scenic highways is provided in Appendix B: Inventory of Designated Scenic Highways and Guidelines of the Mobility Plan 2035 Element and is reproduced in Appendix C of this Draft EIR. It should be noted that several segments of highways within the City are designated as a “state scenic highway” in this appendix but do not appear in the Caltrans Scenic Highways Program.

City of Los Angeles General Plan Framework Element

The City’s Framework Element, adopted in December 1996 and amended in August 2001, establishes the broad overall policy and direction for the entire General Plan. The Framework Element provides that scenic resources are intended to improve community and neighborhood livability in the City. The Framework Element’s open space and conservation policies seek to conserve significant resources and use open space to enhance community and neighborhood character in the City. Applicable goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan are shown in Table 3.1-1.

City of Los Angeles Tree Planting Ordinance

Ordinance No. 183474 amended Sections 61.162, 62.163 and 62.169 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code to clarify that responsibility for planting and maintaining street trees and vegetation within City streets rests with the City, and further clarifies that a property owner in a residential zone may remove and plant vegetation within a parkway, but that street trees may not be removed without a permit.
Table 3.1-1. Applicable Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the City of Los Angeles General Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal/Objective/Policy</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GENERAL PLAN FRAMEWORK - CHAPTER 5 – URBAN FORM AND NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 5A</td>
<td>A livable city for existing and future residents and one that is attractive to future investment. A city of interconnected, diverse neighborhoods that builds on the strengths of those neighborhoods and functions at both the neighborhood and citywide scales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 5.5</td>
<td>Enhance the livability of all neighborhoods by upgrading the quality of development and improving the quality of the public realm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 5.5.4</td>
<td>Determine the appropriate urban design elements at the neighborhood level, such as sidewalk width and materials, street lights and trees, bus shelters and benches, and other street furniture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 5.8</td>
<td>Reinforce or encourage the establishment of a strong pedestrian orientation in designated neighborhood districts, community centers, and pedestrian-oriented subareas within regional centers, so that these districts and centers can serve as a focus of activity for the surrounding community and a focus for investment in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 5.8.2</td>
<td>The primary commercial streets within pedestrian-oriented districts and centers should have the following characteristics:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sidewalks: 15-17 feet wide (see illustrative street cross-sections).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mid-block medians (between intersections): landscaped where feasible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shade trees, pruned above business signs, to provide a continuous canopy along the sidewalk and/or palm trees to provide visibility from a distance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pedestrian amenities (e.g., benches, pedestrian-scale lighting, special paving, window boxes, and planters).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GENERAL PLAN FRAMEWORK - CHAPTER 9 – INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SERVICES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOAL 9Q</td>
<td>A sustainable urban forest that contributes to overall quality of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 9.41</td>
<td>Ensure that the elements of urban forestry are included in planning and programming of infrastructure projects which involve modification of dedicated parkway, sidewalk and/or raised median islands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 9.42</td>
<td>Facilitate the planting of large canopied trees in street parkways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 9.43</td>
<td>Improve city tree selection, placement and maintenance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 9.43.3</td>
<td>Develop a uniform care standard with focus on pruning which can be utilized by appropriate City departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MOBILITY PLAN 2035</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 11</td>
<td>Preserve and enhance access to scenic resources and regional open space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 11.2</td>
<td>Provide for protection and enhancement of views of scenic resources along or visible from designated scenic highways through implementation of guidelines set forth in this 2035 Mobility Plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Board of Public Works Street Tree Removal Permit and Tree Replacement Condition Policies

The City Board of Public Works adopted Street Tree Removal Permit and Tree Replacement Condition Policies on June 17, 2015. These adopted policies formalize existing City practice and: (1) designate the Bureau of Street Services, Chief Forester, as the authorized officer and employee to issue street tree removal permits; (2) require public notification of the proposed removal of three or more street trees; (3) require a Board of Public Works public hearing for consideration of removal of three or more street trees at a specific address; and (4) require as a condition of a street tree removal permit that replacement street trees be provided on a 2:1 basis with 24-inch box size tree stock and be watered for a minimum 3-year period. The Revised Street Tree Retention, Removal and Replacement Policy for the Sidewalk Repair Program would replace these policies with respect to the individual sidewalk repairs implemented under the Project.

City of Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Ordinance

The City maintains a list of all sites, buildings, and structures that have been designated Historic-Cultural Monuments (HCMs) under the Cultural Heritage Ordinance, Los Angeles Administrative Code Section 22.171. The Cultural Heritage Ordinance states that an HCM is any site (including street trees), building, or structure of particular historic or cultural significance specifically designated by the City. HCMs are included in a local register of historical resources and therefore are considered to be historical resources for the purposes of CEQA. The Cultural Heritage Ordinance would continue to apply to all individual sidewalk repairs under the Project.

3.1.2 Environmental Setting

Scenic resources contribute to the visual character of a given area and consist of both natural and urban features. Natural features can include open space, native or ornamental vegetation and landscaping; topographic or geologic features; and natural water sources. Urban or built features include structures of architectural/historical significance or visual prominence, public plazas or art, and landscaped medians. Natural features and urban features that contribute to City scenic vistas, views, and visual character are discussed in detail below.

The visual character of the City is the overall image formed by various physical elements, including natural features and the built environment, such as topography, open space, the street grid, buildings, and major transportation infrastructure. Visual character can be subjective as filtered through the lens and judgment of individuals, is differentiated by neighborhood types, and is based on public views, meaning what is visible from a sidewalk, roadway, or other public right-of-way.

3.1.2.1 Scenic Vistas and Focal Views

The term "views" generally refers to visual access to, or the visibility of, a particular natural or man-made visual resource from a given vantage point or corridor. Focal views focus on particular objects, scene, setting, or feature of visual interest. Panoramic views, or scenic vistas, provide visual access to a large geographic area, for which the field of view can be wide and extend into the distance. Examples of scenic vistas might include an urban skyline, a valley, a mountain range, the ocean, or other water bodies. 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. Public views of the mountains can be
seen from within and outside the City, along various roadways and freeways, and from various public rights-of-way. Public access to these views is typically from parklands, publicly owned sites, and public rights-of-way. Community-specific scenic vistas are detailed in each of the 35 community plans and associated specific plans.

3.1.2.2 Natural Features

Landforms and Geology

The City is characterized as an urbanized area framed by natural features, including the Santa Monica Mountains, San Gabriel Mountains, Santa Susana Mountains, and Baldwin Hills, that define its geography and influences the City’s development patterns.

The Santa Monica Mountain range extends approximately 40 miles east-west along the northern boundaries of the City from the Hollywood Hills community in the City to Point Mugu in Ventura County. The Santa Monica Mountains are parallel to the Santa Susana Mountains, which are located north of the Santa Monica Mountains. The mountain range highest peak point is approximately 3,000 feet and includes the 1,600-foot peak at Mount Hollywood in the Hollywood Hills.

The Santa Susana Mountain peaks range from an average of 2,500 feet to over 3,700 feet. The southeastern slopes of the Santa Susana Mountains are part of the City. The Baldwin Hills range reaches a peak of 500 feet and is located southwest of downtown Los Angeles and borders Culver City.

The San Gabriel Mountain range extends approximately 68 miles and surrounds the eastern boundaries of the City. The mountain range lies between the Los Angeles Basin and the Mojave Desert, with Interstate 5 Freeway to the west and Interstate 15 Freeway to the east. The highest peak in the San Gabriel Mountain, Mount Baldy, is over 10,000 feet. Mount Wilson is another famous peak and is known for the Mount Wilson Observatory and antenna farm that houses several local media transmitters. The San Gabriel Mountains are characterized by pine forests.

Open Space

Open space in the City includes the scenic views of the Santa Monica and San Gabriel Mountain Ranges, beaches, network of rivers and trails, pedestrian paths, approximately 36,000 acres of park and recreation spaces, and 92 miles of hiking trails that contribute to the City’s vast natural resources. The City also includes Griffith Park, one of the largest urban parks in North America, and home to several historic venues and landmarks, including the Griffith Observatory, Greek Theatre, and Hollywood Sign. Beaches include Cabrillo Beach and Venice Beach, and open water facilities include Del Rey Lagoon, Debs Lake, Echo Park Lake, Hansen Dam Aquatic Center, Hollenbeck Lake, Lake Balboa, Lincoln Park Lake, Macarthur Park Lake, and Ken Malloy Harbor Park Lake.

3.1.2.3 Urban/Built Features

Streetscapes

The City of Los Angeles is visually diverse, characterized by large areas of low-rise buildings and scattered clusters of high-rise buildings. Existing development occurs primarily in the basins between the mountain ranges in or around the City. Older, established neighborhoods abound, with newer suburban development in the San Fernando Valley that began after the end of World War II. Even in older, established neighborhoods, new structures are replacing existing older buildings as infill development.
The City’s urban forest contributes to its visual character and street trees are a highly visible component of the urban forest. There are more than 711,000 street trees comprising nearly 600 different species. The City’s street tree population contains the most species diversity and is one of the largest street tree populations in the world.¹

Prominent Structures and Historic Resources

The City contains many structures of architectural/historical significance or visual prominence, with numerous properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources, and locally designated HCMs. Historical resources are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.4, Cultural Resources, of this Draft EIR. Public views of historical resources are typically limited to close foreground views from adjacent streets and sidewalks.

Scenic Highways

Table 3.1-2 identifies the officially designated or eligible state scenic highways and historic parkways, as determined by Caltrans, as well as highway segments that are identified as state scenic highways in the General Plan Mobility Element 2035. These are mapped in Figures 3.1-1 and 3.1-2.

3.1.3 Environmental Impact Analysis

3.1.3.1 Approach

Impacts to scenic resources, views, and the visual character of the City as a result of the Project were evaluated by determining whether temporary or permanent obstructions or changes to views of scenic resources or the visual character would result with the implementation of the Project. As discussed in Chapter 2, Project Description, the Project is the modification to the manner in which a citywide sidewalk repair and maintenance program would occur over a span of 30 years. Implementation of the Project consists of the continuation of construction- and maintenance-related activities but is primarily construction in nature. Impacts related to the Project are anticipated to occur during the construction period rather than the operational period. The only activities that would occur during operation of the Project are periodic street tree watering and inspection. While construction and maintenance watering would occur simultaneously over the life of the Project, these activities would be spread out across different areas of the City and impacts would not combine with regard to aesthetics and visual quality. Therefore, a discussion of combined effects of construction and operation is not required.

3.1.3.2 Project Design Features

No project design features specific to aesthetics are proposed, although project design features related to cultural resources (see Chapter 3.4, Cultural Resources for further detail) may affect aesthetic resources and are referenced where appropriate.

Table 3.1-2. Scenic Highways in the City of Los Angeles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Scenic Highway</th>
<th>Alignment</th>
<th>Sidewalk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caltrans State Scenic Highways Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officially Designated State Scenic Highway</td>
<td>CA State Route 27: Topanga Canyon Road</td>
<td>Pacific Coast Highway to Mulholland Drive within City limits</td>
<td>Primarily no sidewalk; sidewalk south of Mulholland Dr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible State Scenic Highway</td>
<td>Interstate 5</td>
<td>From Interstate 210 to northern City limit</td>
<td>No sidewalk; major freeway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible State Scenic Highway</td>
<td>US Highway 101</td>
<td>Topanga Canyon Boulevard to western City limit</td>
<td>No sidewalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible State Scenic Highway</td>
<td>CA State Route 118</td>
<td>DeSoto Avenue to western City limit</td>
<td>No sidewalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible State Scenic Highway</td>
<td>Interstate 210</td>
<td>From Interstate 5 to eastern City limit</td>
<td>No sidewalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible State Scenic Highway</td>
<td>US Highway 1: Pacific Coast Highway</td>
<td>Entire alignment north of Interstate 10 within the City boundary</td>
<td>Minimal sidewalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Parkway</td>
<td>CA State Route 110</td>
<td>Arroyo Seco Historic Parkway; Figueroa Street/Avenue 26 in Los Angeles to Glenarm Street in Pasadena</td>
<td>No sidewalk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

City of Los Angeles General Plan Mobility Element 2035

| State Scenic Highway | US Highway 1: Lincoln Blvd. | Venice Boulevard to City boundary with Santa Monica | Sidewalk, urbanized |

Figure 3.1-1
State Scenic Highways in the Caltrans Program
Citywide Sidewalk Repair Program
Figure 3.1-2. City of Los Angeles General Plan Mobility Element 2035 Scenic Highway
3.1.3.3 Thresholds of Significance

Consistent with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and the City's 2006 L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide, a determination of significance shall be made on a case by-case basis. A project would normally have a significant impact on aesthetics if the following would occur:

- **AES-1:** Would the proposed Project substantially damage or degrade a designated scenic vista or state scenic highway? Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines
- **AES-2:** Would the proposed Project substantially damage or degrade recognized or valued views, including natural views of topography, mountains, oceans, or man-made visual features, in City of LA adopted land use plans? L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide, Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines
- **AES-3:** Would the proposed Project substantially damage or degrade existing features or elements that contribute to the existing visual character or image of a neighborhood, community, or localized area through removal, alteration, or demolition of street trees? L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide
  - The degree of contrast between proposed features and existing features that represent the area’s valued aesthetic image.
  - The degree to which the project would contribute to the area’s aesthetic value.
  - The extent of obstruction (e.g., total blockage, partial interruption, or minor diminishment)
- **AES-4:** Would the proposed Project substantially damage visual landscape, including but not limited to street trees, utility poles, or historic structures within public right-of-way? L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide.
- **AES-5:** Would the proposed Project result in a substantial loss of shading as a result of street tree retention, removal or replacement throughout the project buildout? L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide.

The Initial Study (Appendix A) considered the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G aesthetics sample question for new sources of substantial light or glare, and determined that the impact would be less than significant. Consistent with the analysis in the Initial Study and the L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide screening criteria, the continuing sidewalk repair activities under the Project would not increase ambient nighttime illumination levels and would not include lighting that would routinely spillover onto a light-sensitive land use, since nighttime construction is not anticipated and any operational lighting would be relocation or replacement of existing light sources in the public right-of-way. Therefore, there would be no significant light or glare impacts from the Project, and no further analysis is provided in the Draft EIR.

3.1.3.4 Construction Impacts

As discussed in Chapter 2, Project Description, implementation of the Project would include the continuation of a variety of construction activities in different locations in the City at various times, including one or more of the following: street tree root pruning, street tree canopy pruning, street tree removal, street tree planting, sidewalk demolition and repaving, relocation of street signs and street lights, and relocation of utility covers. In an effort to analyze the full extent of potential impacts from the Project, two different construction scenarios reflecting varying degrees of intensity
were analyzed: Scenario 1 and Scenario 2. A Scenario 3 was also created for purposes of describing rare instances in individual projects under Scenarios 1 and 2 where environmental site conditions may result in certain significant impacts.

The Project would be implemented over the next 30 years, resulting in the continuation of sidewalk repair activities resulting in approximately 42,719,225 square feet of repaired sidewalks, removal of up to 12,860 street trees, and the planting of approximately 30,405 new street trees. The Project includes the Revised Street Tree Retention, Removal and Replacement Policy for the Sidewalk Repair Program, which would establish criteria for street tree preservation, removal and replacement where street trees are the cause of sidewalk damage. Pursuant to the Policy, replacement street trees would be planted at a 2:1 ratio for the first 10 years of the program, at a 3:1 ratio for years 11 through 21 of the program, and again at a 2:1 ratio for the remaining 9 years of the 30-year program.

Sidewalk and curb ramp repair construction activities are temporary and may occur simultaneously at different sites. Generally, construction activities would occur within public rights-of-way.

AES-1. Would the proposed Project substantially damage or degrade a designated scenic vista or state scenic highway?

The impact would be less than significant during construction.

Implementation of the Project would result in the continuation of sidewalk construction activities at various times and sites throughout the City and could be located in areas in which views of designated scenic vistas or views from state scenic highways exist.

Construction activities under all construction scenarios would include repairs on local sidewalks, potential street tree removals/replacements, and utility relocation activities that may be required to repair, enhance, and improve damaged sidewalks. Existing mature street trees do not generally contribute to any identified scenic vistas, which are considered to be panoramic views of large topographical features or bodies of water. While some Project construction activities would occur within designated view corridors, none of the construction activities or street tree replacements would substantially alter or otherwise degrade scenic vistas of mountains, the ocean, or other natural features. Construction activities would be temporary, would be limited to small areas, do not require much construction equipment, and would occur at or below ground-level for the more intensive construction work. Therefore, there would be less-than-significant impacts on scenic vistas under the construction scenario.

Table 3.1-2 lists one officially designated state scenic highway, seven eligible state scenic highways, and one historic parkway are identified within City boundaries, in addition to one City-designated roadway listed in the City’s Mobility 2035 Plan. Identified scenic highways are typically major freeways and highways and do not have sidewalks along the route with the exception of Lincoln Boulevard and Pacific Coast Highway. There are no sidewalks along Topanga Canyon Boulevard in the segment designated as a state scenic highway. Street trees are also not typically located along these scenic highways, as these areas are primarily characterized with native plants, shrubs, and vegetation. US Highway 1: Lincoln Boulevard is identified in the City’s Mobility Element 2035 as a state scenic highway, although it is not officially identified as such in the Caltrans State Scenic Highways Program. The portion of Lincoln Boulevard between Venice Boulevard north to Rose Avenue (City of Santa Monica boundary) is characterized by developed sidewalks and scattered street trees.
As previously discussed, scenic highways identified in the City are typically major freeways and highways and do not have sidewalks along the route. Along the portions that have sidewalks, sidewalk and curb ramp repair activities may occur. Sidewalk and curb ramp repair activities at each site would be temporary and would not require a large amount of construction equipment at any one site. Construction activities include a one-time sidewalk repair and street tree removals and replacements. Accordingly, for these reasons and the fact that the repair activities occur in urban areas that do not conflict with the existing zoning, the sidewalk repair activities would have no impact or a less-than-significant impact on designated scenic highways.

There are some street trees on both sides of Lincoln Boulevard in the designated scenic segment between Venice Boulevard and Santa Monica City limits to the north. These street trees are scattered and separated by long expanses of non-vegetated sidewalk. Most of these street trees are relatively small; do not provide a mature canopy; do not contribute to the visual quality of the streetscape; and are not causing sidewalk damage, as can be seen in Figures 3.1-3 and 3.1-4. There are no street trees along Pacific Coast Highway in the sections containing sidewalks. Street trees are not located along the remaining scenic highways, as these areas are primarily characterized with native plants, shrubs, and vegetation. For portions of designated scenic highways that may have street trees, street tree preservation, removal and/or replacement, and pruning activities may be required, but given the relative lack of street trees along the two designated scenic highways that contain sidewalks, the quality of the views along these scenic highways would not be impacted by the Project. Therefore, construction activities associated with the Project would not substantially damage or degrade a designated scenic vista or state scenic highway. Impacts would be less than significant.

**Mitigation Measures**

No mitigation is required.

AES-2. **Would the proposed Project substantially damage or degrade recognized or valued views, including natural views of topography, mountains, oceans, or man-made visual features, in City of LA adopted land use plans?**

**The impact would be less than significant during construction.**

As discussed in Section 3.1.2, Environmental Setting, valued views of natural resources include natural views of topography, mountains, oceans, or man-made visual features. Implementation of the Project would be Citywide and could be located in areas in which valued views may be compromised. However, overall, activities under the Project would be temporary and site specific within pedestrian rights-of-way.

Sidewalk, curb ramp repair, and street tree pruning, removal, and replacement could occur on streets that provide focal views of topography, mountains, oceans, or man-made visual features such as the iconic Hollywood sign. Due to the temporary nature of the activities and site-specific locations of the repair activities, sidewalk repair activities and street tree pruning, removal, or replacement would not substantially block, damage, or degrade recognized or valued views. By repairing damaged sidewalks, the overall characteristics of recognized or valued views of the surrounding area would be improved. No permanent damage or degradation of existing valued views would be impacted by sidewalk and curb ramp repair activities. Utility relocation activities would consist of low-profile construction activities at or below ground surface. Above-ground utility work would include relocating the utility poles near the original location. As a result, utility relocation activities are not anticipated to substantially damage or degrade recognized or valued views.
Figure 3.1-3. View of US Highway 1: Lincoln Boulevard
Figure 3.1-4. View of US Highway 1: Lincoln Boulevard
With street trees being removed and replaced, the growth of the younger street trees over the longer term would replenish the street tree canopy of the area with healthy and disease-free street trees, providing an overall benefit to the surrounding area. On a site-specific level, street tree replacement at either a 2:1 or 3:1 ratio, as provided in the proposed street tree policy with the ratio varying by year of implementation, would result in an increase in localized street tree canopy as the replacement street trees reach maturity in 15 years. The street tree replacement requirements would result in the planting of approximately 30,405 new street trees over the span of 30 years. In addition, planting of new street trees would be at the same locations of the removed street trees whenever feasible. This would result in a localized increase in street tree canopy as the replacement street trees reach maturity in 15 years from the time they are planted. Street tree activities would also be beneficial to the aesthetic nature of communities by providing compatible streetscapes. The Project would not damage or degrade recognized or valued views in adopted City land use plans; rather, the biodiversity of the urban forest would be considered and maintained by ensuring species of street trees planted are diverse and compatible with the streetscape and community. The City would have a larger urban canopy size than at the start of the Project, and the urban forest would be enhanced by removing potentially diseased, dead, or damaged street trees.

For the reasons stated above, Project-related construction activities would not damage or degrade recognized or valued views, including natural views of topography, mountains, oceans, or man-made visual features, and impacts would be less than significant.

**Mitigation Measures**

No mitigation is required.

AES-3. Would the proposed Project substantially damage or degrade existing features or elements that contribute to the existing visual character or image of a neighborhood, community, or localized area through removal, alteration, or demolition of street trees?

- The degree of contrast between proposed features and existing features that represent the area’s valued aesthetic image.
- The degree to which the project would contribute to the area’s aesthetic value.
- The extent of obstruction (e.g., total blockage, partial interruption, or minor diminishment)

The impact would be less than significant for construction scenarios 1 and 2. The impact would be significant and unavoidable for construction scenario 3.

Visual character can be subjective as it is filtered through the lens and judgment of individuals and is based on public views, meaning what is visible from a sidewalk, roadway, or other public right-of-way. Existing features of a community, such as the street trees that are of importance and recognized by the federal/state or local laws, may also create the visual character of a community or neighborhood.

In the City, there are a limited number of street trees that have been designated as an HCM by the City Council (more discussion on HCM in 3.1.1.3 Local and in Cultural Resources). These HCM street trees contribute to the overall cultural history of the neighborhood and/or the City. HCM street tree construction activities, such as root pruning, canopy pruning or other street tree-related construction activity would need to comply with the Revised Street Tree Retention, Removal and Replacement Policy for the Sidewalk Removal Program designed to implement arboriculture best
management practices and provide objective standards and processes. All Project construction activities involving historic resources would also be subject to SOI Standards in order to preserve the integrity of the HCM street trees in the public right-of-way as much as possible.

Alteration of HCM street trees for Project activities would be considered a significant impact where SOI Standards cannot feasibly be implemented. This is due to the HCM street tree designation, which provides its uniqueness to the visual character of the neighborhood. The SOI Standards guidelines are outlined in Chapter 3.4, Cultural Resources. The SOI Standards would be applicable for alteration (including, but not limited to root pruning, canopy pruning, watering, etc.) because once the HCM street tree is removed or demolished, it cannot be restored to its original conditions and its historic integrity would be compromised. Furthermore, any construction activities adversely affecting HCM street trees are not included in the ministerial process proposed by the Project, but instead would be subject to an additional discretionary process and the existing HCM review procedures. These discretionary processes would include project-specific environmental review that could result in further conditions of approval, mitigation, or non-approval.

Scenario 3, as discussed in Chapter 2, Project Description, consists of sidewalk and curb ramp repairs which would occur under unusual circumstances or environments. In instances where the integrity of the cultural resource cannot be maintained, there may be a potentially significant impact in the aesthetics or in the visual character due to the Project. Such unusual circumstances and environments include maintaining the aesthetic integrity of a known cultural resource that is a contributing factor in a Historical Preservation Overlay Zone, or within a High Sensitive Cultural Resources area, as defined in the Conservation Element of the Los Angeles General Plan, or a known archeological, paleontological, and tribal artifact or designation or an HCM Street Tree. All local, state, and federal standards would be complied with, where applicable; nonetheless, there still may be Project sites over the next 30 years where maintaining the look and details of a cultural resource may not be possible due to accessibility requirements or because following SOI Standards is infeasible. Moreover, like with HCMs, any construction activities that would significantly affect identified cultural resources are not included in the ministerial process proposed by the Project. Instead, these projects would be subject to an additional discretionary process that could include further project-specific environmental review, as well as further conditions of approval, mitigation, or non-approval.

Such cases where there would be a significant impact for an individual project under Scenario 3 would be very few under the Project. However, because impacts to HCM street trees or other historic street trees within the public right way may occur as a result of the Project, it is conservatively assumed that impacts in this area would be significant.

**Mitigation Measures**

- For the large majority of the Project in Scenarios 1 and 2, impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation measures are required.

- Demolition and/material alteration of a significant cultural resource in Scenario 3 would be considered significant and unavoidable where implementation of limited instances in Scenario 3 projects where implementation of PDF-CUL-1 through PDF-CUL-5 related to assessment, SOI Standards, archaeological treatment plans, and paleontological management treatment plans would not maintain the significance of the cultural resource. No other feasible mitigation measures have been identified at this time. For further discussion, see Chapter 3.4, Cultural Resources.
AES-4. Would the proposed Project substantially damage visual landscape, including but not limited to street trees, utility poles, or historic structures within public right-of-way?

The impact would be less than significant for construction scenarios 1 and 2. The impact would be significant and unavoidable for construction scenario 3.

As previously discussed, the visual landscape of the City includes such features as the urban forest, infrastructure, and prominent structures, including historic structures. The continuation of activities under the Project has the potential to alter the visual landscape of a community or neighborhood through the removal of street trees; however, compliance with applicable laws and regulations and PDFs would ensure impacts to the visual landscape would be less than significant. Pursuant to the Revised Street Tree Retention, Removal and Replacement Policy for the Sidewalk Repair Program, any street trees removed would be replaced at a 2:1 or 3:1 ratio. Furthermore, implementation of the Project would yield aesthetic benefits in the form of repaired sidewalks and a healthy urban forest, thereby improving visual landscapes.

Repair projects requiring utility relocation activities are similarly not anticipated to substantially damage the visual landscape. Repair projects requiring minor utility relocation would entail temporary, low-profile construction activities at or below ground surface. Where sidewalk repairs require more substantial utility work, including the relocation of utility poles, construction activities would be temporary and poles would be relocated near the original location.

As noted in the discussion for Impact AES-3, the removal of mature street trees has the potential to alter the visual character of neighborhoods where street trees are an integral part of the visual landscape or in residential neighborhoods with mature street tree canopies but it would not substantially degrade the visual landscape. The removal and replacement of street trees would be incremental and change every 5 years based on the specified individual project activity increases required by the Settlement in combination with the proposed street tree replacement policy. In fact, 15 years into the Project, a street tree planted during the first year would reach maturity and contribute to the area’s aesthetic value. In addition, within the first 15 years, there would be two or three street trees at maturity for every mature street tree removed. In total, 30,405 new street trees that would be disease- and damage-free would be planted. Therefore, in the long term, or after 30 years, the overall visual landscape and the immediate surrounding area would be improved and the urban canopy would be larger than at the start of the Project. As noted above, there would be net neutral gain in street tree canopy beginning in year 30 of the Project. At the end of the Project, the City would have a larger ratio of street trees to urban canopy than it did before the Project started.

Scenario 3, as discussed in Chapter 2, Project Description and above, consists of sidewalk and curb ramp repairs which would occur under unusual circumstances or environments. In the rare instances where the integrity of the cultural resource cannot be maintained, there may be a potentially significant impact in the aesthetics or in the visual character due to the Project. Any construction activities that would significantly affect identified cultural resources are not included in the ministerial process proposed by the Project. However, because impacts on HCM street trees, utility poles, or other historic structures within the public right way may occur as a result of the Project, it is conservatively assumed that impacts in this area would be significant for those instances, and they are characterized as Scenario 3.
Mitigation Measures

- For the large majority of the Project in Scenarios 1 and 2, impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation measures are required.

- Demolition and/material alteration of a significant historical resource in Scenario 3 would be considered significant and unavoidable where implementation of limited instances in Scenario 3 projects where implementation of PDF-CUL-1 through PDF-CUL-2 related to assessment and SOI Standards would not maintain the significance of the historical resource. No other feasible mitigation measures have been identified at this time. For further discussion, see Chapter 3.4, Cultural Resources.

AES-5. Would the proposed Project result in a substantial loss of shading as a result of street tree retention, removal, or replacement throughout the project buildout?

The impact would be less than significant during construction.

Construction activities, such as sidewalk repair and utility relocation, could result in removal of street trees and thus the loss of mature street tree canopies which provide shade. Construction activities include an estimated 1,460 street tree removals in the first 5 years and incremental removal to a total of 12,860 street trees by year 30 of the Project. In most instances where sidewalk repair is needed, the mature street tree roots are the cause of sidewalk damage (see Chapter 2, Project Description). The Project would employ street tree retention through root pruning and canopy pruning to the extent feasible—in order to avoid removal of a street tree—and would also replace removed street trees with younger, healthy street trees at a minimum 2:1 replacement ratio for the first 10 years, 3:1 for the next 11 years, and 2:1 for the remaining 9 years (PDF-BIO-2). In other words, the Project would include planting approximately 2,900 replacement street trees in the first 5 years and incremental planting of approximately 30,405 replacement street trees over the 30 years of the Project. This would result in a net increase of approximately 17,544 street trees, which is an approximately 2.5% increase in street trees in the City. Temporary impacts on the City’s urban forest and street tree canopy may occur because a new replacement street tree would require approximately 15 years to mature, on average (see Biological Resources). However, at approximately Year 30 of the Project, the City would be at net neutral for street tree canopy and shade would be reestablished to the level at the start of the Project. This would mean no loss or gain by approximately Year 30, because all the urban canopy would have been restored. In the long term, Project would not only replenish the street tree canopy, but starting from approximately Year 30 there would also be a net increase of approximately 298.3 acres to street tree canopy cover. These 298.3 acres represent an increase of approximately 0.72% canopy cover above the street tree baseline by year 46 with a healthy, disease-free, and diverse street tree population.

There would be a temporary impact due to the removal of street trees; however, this would only last until replacement street trees reach maturity (approximately 15 years), and street tree removals would occur throughout the City at different times. With each consecutive year of the Project, as street trees are being removed, they are also being replaced within a year in an existing street tree well. Additionally, the removal and replacement of street trees would be incremental. Therefore, 15 years into the program, the street trees planted during the first year would be mature and would contribute to the area’s aesthetic value and provide the shade that was temporarily lost. There would be a localized impact on shade as a result of removal of street trees until replacement street trees reach maturity at a specific tree well for an individual sidewalk repair. Although shade would
be temporarily reduced at some specific sites, the growth of more, younger replacement street trees in the long term would replenish the street tree canopy of the area with healthy and disease-free street trees, providing an overall benefit to the surrounding area. Thus, the temporary impact on shade due to removal of street trees would be less than significant.

Notwithstanding the temporary localized impacts, the overall shade in the City would not be significantly impacted because street trees make up only a small percentage of the citywide canopy. There are approximately 711,248 street trees providing 17,670 acres of street tree canopy cover in the City, whereas the total citywide canopy cover is 45,061 acres. The total number of street trees to be removed incrementally represents approximately 1.8%, or approximately 344 acres, of the overall street tree canopy cover, which is 0.76% of the citywide tree canopy. Thus, when looking at one site where, on average, one tree is removed, the amount of shade lost is negligible in relation to the citywide canopy cover. As street trees are being removed through the Project term, two or three times as many replacement street trees would be planted every year. At year 30, the shade would be reestablished due to the maturation of the replaced street trees. After year 30, the replaced street trees from the latter years of the Project would mature and contribute to a greater amount of shade in the City compared to the baseline. This means that at the end of the Project the City will have a greater ratio of street trees to urban canopy than it did before the Project started.

Specifically, the Project is expected to create an additional 298.3 acres of street tree canopy cover in the City (see Biological Resources for more information).

Communities where street tree canopies are minimal may also benefit if newly planted street trees provide greater canopy than what is currently there now. The Bureau of Engineering, in partnership with the Bureau of Street Services, would maintain and monitor growth, ensuring survival of all preserved and newly planted street trees for 3 years from the time of planting under the Project. Overall, there would be a net gain in street tree canopy Citywide that would result in additional shading. Growth of street trees would continue to be monitored through the Bureau of Street Service and the Urban Forestry Division. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

**Mitigation Measures**

No mitigation is required.

### 3.1.3.5 Operational Impacts

The continuation of operational activities from the Project would include sidewalk inspection and street tree monitoring and watering with a hose that is attached to a water tank on a pick-up truck. During construction activities, the street trees would have been planted in a 4- by 6-foot street tree well, per the proposed Revised Street Tree Retention, Removal and Replacement Policy for the Sidewalk Repair Program. As discussed Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the street trees will be manually watered 33 times annually. For the times when manual watering is not feasible, two 15-gallon water bags would be placed in the street tree well for the new street trees until the next scheduled manual watering. Other than routine watering and inspection, there are no additional operations associated with the Project. As a result of the proposed Revised Street Tree Retention, Removal and Replacement Policy for the Sidewalk Repair Program, there would be an increase in the number of street trees from the baseline count of 711,248 to 728,793 and an approximate 0.72 percent net increase of the street tree canopy cover.
AES-1. Would the proposed Project substantially damage or degrade a designated scenic vista or state scenic highway?

There would be no impact during operation.

Operation of the Project would involve only the continuation of replacement street tree watering and routine inspection activities. There would be no impact on designated scenic vistas or state scenic highways during operation.

**Mitigation Measures**

No mitigation measures related to operational activities are required.

AES-2. Would the proposed Project substantially damage or degrade recognized or valued views, including natural views of topography, mountains, oceans, or man-made visual features, in City of LA adopted land use plans?

There would be no impact during operation.

Operation of the Project would involve only the continuation of replacement street tree watering and routine inspection activities. Routine watering and inspection activities would not obstruct scenic vistas or focal views. There would be no impact on recognized or valued views during operation.

**Mitigation Measures**

No mitigation measures related to operational activities are required.

AES-3. Would the proposed Project substantially damage or degrade existing features or elements that contribute to the existing visual character or image of a neighborhood, community, or localized area through removal, alteration, or demolition of street trees?

- The degree of contrast between proposed features and existing features that represent the area’s valued aesthetic image.
- The degree to which the project would contribute to the area’s aesthetic value.
- The extent of obstruction (e.g., total blockage, partial interruption, or minor diminishment).

There would be no impact during operation.

Operation of the Project would involve only the continuation of replacement street tree watering and routine inspection activities. A watering or inspection truck periodically traveling through a neighborhood would not alter the visual character of the environment. There would be no impact during operation.

**Mitigation Measures**

No mitigation measures related to operational activities are required.
AES-4. Would the proposed Project substantially damage visual landscape, including but not limited to street trees, utility poles, or historic structures within public right-of-way?

There would be no impact during operation.

Operation of the Project would involve only the continuation of replacement street tree watering and routine inspection activities. A watering or inspection truck periodically traveling through a neighborhood would not alter the visual character of the environment. There would be no impact during operation.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures related to operational activities are required.

AES-5. Would the proposed Project result in a substantial loss of shading as a result of street tree retention, removal, or replacement throughout the project buildout?

There would be no impact during operation.

Operation of the Project would involve only the continuation of replacement street tree watering and routine inspection activities. Newly planted young street trees would need an average of approximately 15 years, depending on species, for the street tree canopy to mature and provide substantial shade. Therefore, while Project construction is continuing after Year 15, the street trees planted within the first year would be “operational” or mature to provide shade in the City. Also, these would be twice as many in number compared to the street trees removed. Street tree replacements would, in the long term, create a sustainable urban forest that contributes to overall quality of life and would ensure that the elements of urban forestry are included in planning and programming of infrastructure projects. Through the operation of the Project, after 30 years, there would be a 344.2 acre-feet of net gain in urban canopy in the City. There would be no impact related to loss of shade during Project operation.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures related to operational activities are required.

3.1.4 Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

As analyzed above, there may be a few sidewalk and curb ramp repair sites where potentially significant impacts to aesthetics and visual character would occur when SOI Standards cannot be implemented, as discussed in Chapter 3.4, Cultural Resources. This would mean that the historic resource is demolished, destroy, or damaged in such a way that its integrity and importance is impacted, despite the implementation of design features and any feasible mitigation. In these rare Scenario 3 projects, the impacts on aesthetics are significant and unavoidable.