

4.1 AESTHETICS

4.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

IN THIS SECTION:

- Visual Character of the Project Area
- Scenic Views & Scenic Resources
- Visual Character of Project Site
- Views of Project Site
- Regulatory Setting

VISUAL CHARACTER OF PROJECT AREA

The project site is located within the Beach area of the City at the base of Beach Hill. The project site is located across the street from the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. The Boardwalk is a dominant visual feature and landmark in the immediate area. The Boardwalk buildings and rides are the largest-scale structures in the area and occupy most of the waterfront along Beach Street. Historically, this scale was matched by the Casa del Rey Resort Hotel located on the north side of Beach Street and the former grand Sea Beach Hotel (City of Santa Cruz, 1998). The Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf is another dominant feature of the landscape and is located just southwest of the project site.

Development in the immediate project area is characterized primarily by a mix of mostly two-, and three-story motels/inns and retail buildings. According to the City's Beach and South of Laurel Comprehensive Plan, remnants of the former seaside resort grandeur are evident between Second Street and the amusement park, where historic Spanish Colonial Revival buildings are intermixed with simpler buildings (City of Santa Cruz, 1998). Other remnants of this past grandeur are large-scale Victorian-style seaside residences and resorts in the Beach Hill and West Cliff Drive areas. Buildings located on Beach Hill have a cascading character with multi-level rooflines. The Dream Inn, located on a hill along West Cliff Drive west of the project site, is visually prominent from the Main Beach area due to its 10-story height.

The visual character of the area is comprised of the Boardwalk, Wharf and views of Monterey Bay combined with development on the landward side of Beach Street that is framed by the Santa Cruz Mountains in the background. Landscaping is limited in the project vicinity. There are groupings of palm trees planted along Beach Street.

SCENIC VIEWS & SCENIC RESOURCES

The Monterey Bay provides the dominant scenic view in the project area. Views of Monterey Bay are prominent throughout the project area and to the west along West Cliff Drive. Beach Hill and the Santa Cruz Mountains in the background frame panoramic ocean views and mid-range views of Beach area development as seen from some vantage points along West Cliff Drive.

According to the City's Local Coastal Plan (LCP) and maps prepared for General Plan 2030 (and included in the General Plan EIR), there are no mapped scenic views from the project site (LCP Map CD-3 and General Plan [GP] EIR Figure 4.3-1). Views of the Bay are available from area streets, including looking down Main and Westbrook from their corners at First Street.

The project site is located below the Beach Hill neighborhood, which is identified as an "urban skyline" in the City's LCP (Map CD-3). The Municipal Wharf, public lookouts along West Cliff Drive, and the ocean bluff on the east side of the San Lorenzo River are identified in the City's LCP (Map CD-3) as scenic "viewpoints and panoramas," and as panoramic views in the City's General Plan EIR (GP EIR Figure 4.3-1). The edge of Ocean View Park that overlooks the San Lorenzo River also is identified as a scenic viewpoint in the LCP. The Wharf provides panoramic views of Monterey Bay and the distant Monterey Peninsula, as well as prominent views of the Boardwalk, development in the Beach area, and portions of West Cliff Drive.

West Cliff Drive and Bay Street are identified as "scenic drives" in the City's LCP (Map CD-3). The Boardwalk and nearby Dream Inn are identified as "visually distinctive structures" on the LCP Scenic Views Map (Map CD-3); and the Boardwalk, Wharf, and nearby Depot Park sites are identified as "visual landmarks" on the General Plan 2030 EIR's Significant Views/Features Map (GP EIR Figure 4.3-1).

VISUAL CHARACTER OF PROJECT SITE

The project site slopes from north to south and west to east. The south-southeastern part of the site contains the existing La Bahia structures. The northwestern area of the site is level with First Street and contains a former swimming pool that has been backfilled with soil. A chain link fence borders the site on Main and First Streets. There are some planted horticultural trees, including palm trees, along Beach Street, Main Street, and Westbrook Street.

The existing La Bahia structures are mostly two stories, with a couple of one-story elements and one three-story wing. The complex was built in 1926 and is characterized as an example of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture. The existing structures, which stretch the entire length of Beach Street and along two-thirds of Westbrook Street, include six structures that are interconnected in places, creating an "L-shaped" complex (see Figure 1-3)¹. The exterior walls are covered with textured stucco, with windows with very little articulation. The roof is covered with brick-red Spanish tiles and rolled roofing at various sections. The façade facing the beach also includes a bell tower that rises above the two- and three-story height of the building. The tower is square in shape and features four round-arch openings flanked by classical pilasters. The roof of the tower is characterized by colorful, patterned tiles and four round-arch openings flanked by classical pilasters (Hill, 1996). The bell tower is a prominent visual feature along portions of Beach Street. Overall, the existing structures appear to be in poor and deteriorating condition. Figure 2-1 presents photos of the site, and the HISTORICAL RESOURCES (4.2) section of this EIR discusses the historical significance of the La Bahia site.

¹ All EIR figures are included in Chapter 7.0 at the end of the EIR (before appendices) for ease of reference, as some figures are referenced in several sections.

Existing landscaping is limited to 11 horticultural, mostly small, trees on the southern portion of the site and in the courtyards. Four Queen Ann palm trees are located along the public sidewalks on the southwest and southeast corners of the site.

VIEWS OF PROJECT SITE

The site and immediate vicinity are visible to varying degrees from the Santa Cruz Beach, the Municipal Wharf, Beach Street, portions of West Cliff Drive, as well as from within the immediate neighborhood. Figures 2-3-A through 2-3-H present existing views of the La Bahia site, as well as photosimulations of the proposed project, which are reviewed in section 4.1.3 below. Figure 2-2 shows the locations of the photosimulations.

The project site and existing structures are most prominent from two scenic viewpoints identified in the LCP: the Municipal Wharf and along West Cliff Drive. From the Wharf, the existing buildings form part of the massing of existing structures along the base of Beach Hill. The Cocoanut Grove, Boardwalk, and Dream Inn also are prominent structural features of views from the Wharf. From viewpoints along West Cliff Drive, the existing La Bahia is again part of the massing of existing structures that generally extend east from Pacific Avenue and up Beach Hill. The Cocoanut Grove building and the distant forested mountains also are prominent background features, while the Monterey Bay is the dominant scenic feature along West Cliff Drive. The La Bahia site is visible as part of the distant view from Ocean View Park, a designated scenic viewpoint in the City's LCP. However, given the distance, it is not a prominent feature, with the Dream Inn being more dominant as part of the background view. The project site is blocked from view along most of the Main Beach by the Boardwalk facilities, except for the beach area directly in front of the property. Additionally, the Boardwalk blocks views of the site from East Cliff Drive.

REGULATORY SETTING

City Regulations and Permits

DESIGN PERMIT

The City's Zoning Ordinance requires a "design permit" for most new construction in the City of Santa Cruz, including for principal permitted uses in the "Tourist Residential, Subdistrict C- Beach Commercial" (R-T(C)) zone district in which the project site is located. This requires review of architectural and site development proposals to ensure the application of recognized principles of design, planning, aesthetics, and qualities typifying the Santa Cruz community. Pursuant to the Design Permit requirements (Zoning Ordinance Section 24.08.430), findings must be made that address 17 identified criteria, which are summarized below, before the City issues a design permit. Chapter 24.12 of the Zoning Ordinance provides "Community Design Standards" that address general site design standards, parking, advertising and signs, underground utilities, historic preservation, and other provisions for specific uses. The criteria to be addressed in findings for a Design Permit include:

1. Consistency with physical development policies of the General Plan and Local Coastal Program, if located in the coastal zone.

2. Compatible exterior design and appearance with other existing buildings and structures in neighborhoods which have established architectural character worthy of preservation.
3. Respect design principles in terms of maintaining a balance of scale, form and proportion, using design components which are harmonious, and materials and colors which blend with elements of the site plan and surrounding areas.
4. Site planning that takes into account uses other than that of a proposed project.
5. Orientation and location of buildings, structures, open spaces and other features to maintain natural resources including significant trees, maintain a compatible relationship to and preserve solar access of adjacent properties, and minimize alteration of natural land forms.
6. Protection of views along the ocean and of scenic coastal areas, and where appropriate and feasible, restore and enhance visual quality of visually degraded areas.
7. Site layout to minimize the effect of traffic conditions on abutting streets.
8. Encourage alternatives to travel by automobile where appropriate, through the provision of facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit.
9. Provision of open space and landscaping which complement buildings and structures.
10. Reasonably protect against external and internal noise, vibration and other factors which may tend to make the environment less desirable and respect the need for privacy of adjacent residents.
11. Provision of complementary signs.
12. Structural designs to take advantage of natural elements such as solar radiation, wind, and landscaping for heating, cooling and ventilation.
13. Incorporation of water-conservation features and landscaping.
14. Reuse of heat generated by machinery in industrial zones.
15. Design of buildings in industrial zones to make use of natural lighting wherever possible.
16. Solar heating systems for hot tubs and swimming pools.
17. Compatible siting and design along West Cliff Drive streetscape.

DEFINITION OF HEIGHT AND PLANNED DEVELOPMENT PERMIT

The City of Santa Cruz Zoning Ordinance (Municipal Code section 24.22.162) defines building height as the vertical distance from average grade to the average midpoint of the highest pitched roof. In calculating the height of a stepped or terraced building, the height of each individual segment of the building shall first be calculated; the height of a stepped or terraced building is the height of the tallest segment of the building. Section 24.12.150 of the Zoning Ordinance indicates that the height limitations do not apply to roof structures for the housing of elevators, stairways, tanks, ventilating fans, air conditioning, or similar equipment used solely to operate and maintain a building.

Current zoning for the project site allows for a maximum height of 36 feet in the Beach Commercial (RTC) zone. The zoning regulations stipulate that uninhabitable mechanical penthouses shall be limited to 10 percent of the roof area, and will be permitted an additional 10-foot height allowance provided that they are set back from the face of the building by a minimum of 20 feet so as not to be visible to pedestrians. Architectural elements such as bell towers, spires, turrets, cupolas, chimneys, dormers, etc., are limited to 15 percent of the roof area and may extend 10 feet above the height limitation, subject to design permit review.

The Planned Development Permit (PD) regulations in the Zoning Ordinance (24.08.720) allow a variation in height not to exceed one story or 20 percent of height limit (in feet) above what is allowed in the district in which the project is located, with approval of a Planned Development Permit. Five findings must be made with the approval of a Planned Development Permit related to consistency with the General Plan, LCP, and other regulations; variations that serve public purposes and are coordinated with surrounding development; and provision of amenities.

BEACH COMMERCIAL ZONE – DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

The RTC zone district regulations require that development be in compliance with adopted design guidelines, including the Design Guidelines of the *Beach and South of Laurel Comprehensive Area Plan* (B/SOL Area Plan). Section 24.10.624.2f provides specific design requirements:

- f.1. The design of all new structures shall be based upon “Spanish Colonial Revival” architecture, as well as Mission Revival and Mediterranean architecture, as described in the design guidelines. “Fantasy Victorian” is encouraged for recreational and entertainment development.
- f.2. Buildings shall be designed with stucco walls, courtyards, arches, towers, balconies, wood doors and windows, or appropriate materials that emulate the scale, proportions, and look of wood, decorative iron, and tile details or other features typical of Spanish Colonial Revival style.
- f.3. Building forms shall suggest thick masonry reminiscent of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture, and incorporate features such as recessed doors and windows.
- f.4. Building walls shall be stucco and colored white, off-white, or very light value, warm-toned hues. Multiple color combinations may be used, provided they are subtle and consist of a limited number of colors. Variations in shade or tone can be used to articulate architectural features.
- f.5. Roofs shall be hipped terra cotta tile roofs or flat roofs completely surrounded by a parapet. This parapet shall incorporate curvilinear decorative shapes and moldings.
- f.6. Flat-roofed buildings shall incorporate porches, window overhangs, trellises, wall and opening articulation, or other features to avoid a bare-box appearance.

Beach/South of Laurel Design Guidelines

The “Beach and South of Laurel Plan Design Guidelines,” adopted by the City in October 1998, is both an appendix to the B/SOL Area Plan and part of the City’s certified LCP. The purpose of the Guidelines is to “promote development that respects the physical and environmental characteristics of the community and site, and which reflects functional and attractive site planning and high quality design.” The intent of the Design Guidelines is to assist the City and community to achieve a high quality of aesthetic and functional design. The Goals and Objectives section states the comprehensive aims or purposes as identified by the General Plan and B/SOL Area Plan. The objectives describe actions to be taken to meet the goals. The General Design Guidelines describe methods to be used to attain the goals and objectives. General Design Guidelines apply to all types of development throughout the plan areas. Plan Area Design Guidelines provide direction for development within each Plan Area to be used in addition to the General Design Guidelines. Projects will be evaluated on their ability to meet the goals and objectives stated in the Design Guidelines.

The General Design Guidelines address streetscapes and entries; site planning; architecture; landscaping; screening, lighting and security; signage; and conservation districts; as well as specific guidelines for each of the four subareas covered by the B/SOL Area Plan. The site planning guidelines generally address the arrangement, design, and scale of new buildings, as well as design of entries, driveways, parking areas, and pedestrian areas. The architecture guidelines address general design elements to demonstrate compatibility with surrounding areas, as well as building proportions, texture and detail of materials, and window placement and openings. The landscaping guidelines address general planting parameters, as well as specific elements for hotels.

Additional guidelines are provided for the Beach Commercial area in which the proposed project is located. The stated goal for this area is to “Recapture the former Ocean Resort grandeur, character and scale through intensification of tourist-oriented development that promotes year-round activities in the Beach area.” One of the objectives is to “encourage improvements to lodging facilities, including development of a quality, full-service, hotel conference facility and redevelopment of older facilities.” To this end, one specific guideline encourages multi-level development “to enhance the grand resort character of the area” and states that no new buildings shall be less than two stories.

The architecture section of the Guidelines provides guidelines for two distinct architectural styles: Spanish Colonial Revival and Victorian. The Guidelines state that the Spanish Colonial Revival style shall be used to establish the design theme for new development in the Beach Commercial and Beach Flats subareas of the B/SOL Area Plan. Specifically, the Guidelines indicate that architecture shall adhere to the following design guidelines:

- Buildings shall be designed with stucco walls, courtyards, arches, towers, balconies, wood doors and windows, decorative iron and tile details, or other features typical of the Spanish Colonial Revival style.
- Building forms shall suggest thick masonry reminiscent of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture and incorporate features such as recessed doors and windows.
- Building walls shall be stucco and colored white, off-white, or very light-to-medium value, warm-toned hues.
- Multiple color combinations may be used, provided they are subtle and consist of a limited number of colors. Variations in shade or tone can be used to articulate architectural features.
- Roofs shall be hipped terra cotta tile roofs or flat roofs completely surrounded by a parapet.²
- Parapets shall incorporate curvilinear decorative shapes and molding.
- Flat-roofed buildings shall incorporate porches, window overhangs, trellises, wall and opening articulation, or other features to avoid a bare-box appearance. Wall surfaces shall have decorative texture or ornament concentrated around doors and windows.

² A parapet is a low, protective wall or railing extending along the edge of a raised structure such as a roof or balcony.

- Tile roof colors shall be natural clay terra cotta tones.
- Stained wood is preferred; however, trim also may be painted a darker-value color than the main building color.
- Wood sash or casement windows shall be used to maintain compatible architectural character. Vinyl-clad wood or baked enamel aluminum frame windows are acceptable if they duplicate the established architectural style.

4.1.2 RELEVANT PROJECT ELEMENTS

The proposed hotel facility will cover the entire block that is bound by Beach, Westbrook, First, and Main Streets. The proposed project is composed of the following uses:

- A 165-room hotel
- Conference / banquet facilities totaling 4,350 square feet
- A 2,500 square foot restaurant (150 seats)
- A 750 square foot day spa
- Retail space totaling 2,500 square feet

Proposed Architecture and Design

PROPOSED REHABILITATION OF RETAINED HISTORIC BUILDING

The proposed project includes preservation and rehabilitation of the existing bell tower and a portion of the southeastern building. Figure 1-8 the proposed Demolition Plan, shows the area of the proposed building retention. The existing eight apartment units in the retained building will be maintained and rehabilitated into guest rooms. The existing tower element and existing stairs will be retained.

According to information provided by the Applicant to the City Planning Department, the exterior walls and primary structural bearing walls will be maintained and will be structurally upgraded with new shear plywood and required seismic upgrades. The exterior finishes (stucco, terra cotta clay tile roof, eave details, balcony, etc.) will be repaired. The exterior wall configuration, fenestration, and entry gates also will be maintained and rehabilitated. New painted aluminum windows will be installed within the existing window openings to replace the non-historic windows. The window size and profile will be compatible with the historic building. The existing stairs, entry gate, and circulation will be maintained. The project includes repair of the historic tower element, including the decorative tile features, the terra cotta clay tile roof, and stucco finishes.

NEW BUILDING ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The architecture of the new structure incorporates white stucco walls with red tile roofs, but is differentiated from the retained historic portion of the building to “avoid false historicism .” Architectural features include balconies, some bay windows, ornamental glazed tiles, decorative

iron work, and trellises. Parapet design incorporates curvilinear, decorative metalwork in the parapet walls, along with a cast stone parapet cap. New terra cotta tile roofs are proposed to match original roof color.

LIGHTING

At this time, there are no detailed plans for lighting on the site. However, according to the project landscaping plan, exterior lighting will feature soft glows and will accent significant features and elements of the courtyards while maintaining adequate levels of light for safety. Exterior lighting will be shielded down to prevent glare.

Building Heights

The proposed hotel is planned primarily as a three-story structure that is stepped up from Beach Street to First Street, although the northwestern corner of the hotel will be up to four stories. Due to the change in elevation, the project contains six levels. The new building heights will be two to three stories at Beach Street, with building height ranging from 32 to 43 feet. The elevation along First Street will consist of three stories to three and one-half stories, with a building height of approximately 43 feet. The proposed building heights are based on the average grade as established within 10 site segments, in accordance with City zoning regulations. Rooftop mechanical equipment and architectural elements extend above this height, as permitted by City regulations.

The current maximum building height allowable in the Beach Commercial zone district is 36 feet. However, under provisions of the City's Zoning Ordinance, a Planned Development Permit could allow an increase in building height not to exceed one story or 20 percent of the allowed height (in feet), over and above regulations established in the zone district in which the project is proposed. Thus, a height of 43 feet could be allowed with approval of a Planned Development Permit. Figures 1-7-A and 1-7-B present the proposed exterior building elevations from each side of the property, and also show the calculated permitted height level based on average grade.

Proposed Landscaping

Project plans include approximately 7,700 square feet of outdoor courtyards, patios, and landscaping. The proposed landscaping design is a collection of outdoor courtyards and patios, and features a large north-south courtyard on the third level that supports the pool and surrounding pool deck. The pool deck will be framed with 36-foot high pre-cast lightweight planters filled with myrtle hedges and other Mediterranean plants. A bocce ball court is planned for the fifth level of the hotel. A shallow water feature is planned at the hotel entrance.

The landscaping includes entry plantings, street trees, decorative planters (that also serve as stormwater bio-planters), and internal landscaping, as well as use of permeable pavers. Thirteen trees are planned around the perimeter of the proposed hotel, including bay laurel, palm, and yucca trees, as well as four clusters of three Mexican fan palm trees. Additional yuccas and planter boxes are proposed for each floor. The project landscaping plan indicates that plant materials reflect Mediterranean, native, or low-maintenance species, and the intent is

to salvage and maintain a portion of the existing mature aloe plants and re-install them in the new project courtyards.

4.1.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING SIGNIFICANCE

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); State CEQA Guidelines (including Appendix G); City of Santa Cruz plans, policies and/or guidelines; and agency and professional standards, a project impact would be considered significant if the project would:

- 1a Eliminate or substantially adversely affect, modify, or obstruct a visually prominent or significant public scenic vista, public viewing area, or public view corridor, including views of the ocean, to and along the shoreline, and panoramic background mountain views;
- 1b Eliminate or substantially adversely effect significant scenic resources along a scenic highway or designated scenic roadway, including, but not limited to, visually prominent trees, rock outcrops, or historic buildings, or visually prominent trees or historic-landmark buildings in other locations within the City;
- 1c Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the surrounding area--i.e., be incompatible with the scale or visual character of the surrounding area, or substantially detract from the integrity, character, and/or aesthetic character of the neighborhood; or
- 1d Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views or activities in the area, or pose a nuisance. This includes ambient nighttime illumination levels that would be increased beyond the property line, or use of highly reflective building materials.

Although not required under CEQA or the State CEQA Guidelines, this section includes a shadow study prepared for the project. For this topic, a project would have a significant impact if it would unreasonably block sunlight for neighboring buildings for long periods of time. Specifically, a project would have a significant shading impact if it would:

- 1e Introduce landscape that would now or in the future cast shadow on existing solar heat collectors (in conflict with California Public Resource Code Section 25980-25986) or cast a shadow that substantially impairs the functions of a building using passive solar collection, solar collectors for heating water, or photovoltaic collectors; or
- 1f Cast a shadow that substantially impairs the beneficial use of any public or quasi-public park, lawn, garden, or open space.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

As described in the Initial Study (see Appendix A), limited tree removal was found to be a less-than-significant impact on scenic resources (1b). Subsequent to the release of the Initial Study and EIR NOP, a project arborist report was submitted. Therefore, this section includes a review of tree removal and impacts to scenic resources (1b), as well as impacts to scenic views (1a), the potential to substantially degrade the visual character of the surrounding area (1c), and potential creation of a new source of substantial light or glare (3d). Although not required in the State CEQA Guidelines, the following section also provides discussion of a shadow study prepared for the project (1e-g).

Scenic Views and Scenic Resources

Impact 4.1-1: Scenic Views

The proposed project will be visible from several designated public scenic viewpoints, but the proposed structure will not eliminate or substantially adversely affect a scenic view. Thus, this is considered a *less-than-significant impact*.

The proposed project will result in demolition of most of the existing La Bahia structure and construction of a new structure, with retention of the existing bell tower and southeastern portion of the building. As previously indicated, the project site and existing structures are visible from the Municipal Wharf and from public lookouts along West Cliff Drive, which are identified in the City's LCP as scenic "viewpoints and panoramas" and as panoramic views in the City's General Plan. Portions of the site are also visible as part of distant views from Ocean View Park, which is identified as having panoramic views in the City's LCP. The site is not visible from the east side of the San Lorenzo River, which also is identified as a scenic viewpoint in the City's LCP and General Plan.

Photosimulations of the proposed project were prepared by the project architects to illustrate how the building will look from various vantage points. These are shown on Figures 2-3-A through 2-3-I, and are further discussed below and under the Impact 4.1-3 discussion. The photosimulations were reviewed and found to be accurate by the Planning Department's architectural consultant, The Odermatt Group.

VIEWS FROM MUNICIPAL WHARF

As seen on Figure 2-3-A, the project site is part of the view of existing development along Beach Street as seen from the Wharf. Existing development to the west and east of the project site is stepped up the slope that descends from Beach Hill, and creates a continuous building mass that is broken up by varied architectural styles and rooflines. The existing homes along First Street provide the upper limit of this massing. The Cocoanut Grove building to the east of the project site is a dominant visual feature from this vantage point.

The proposed project will result in retention of the existing bell tower and southeastern portion of the existing building, which will be surrounded by the new portion of the proposed hotel. The

new construction will fill in the existing vacant portion of the site in the northeastern corner of the property. The building will be visible from the Municipal Wharf, as is other existing development. As can be seen on Figure 2-3-A, existing development surrounding the project site is terraced up to Beach Hill and effectively creates a continuous band of building mass that is broken up by various heights and rooflines. The new hotel will be within the overall height of existing building mass and will not extend above the existing rooflines created by structures on First Street or above the existing background treeline or mountains. The overall building mass of the new structure will be broken by stepped levels, window treatments, balconies, and the central pool deck. Furthermore, the overall scale and mass of the proposed hotel are similar to or less than the scale and mass of the nearby Cocoanut Grove. Thus, the project will not substantially degrade the scenic views available from the Municipal Wharf.

VIEWS FROM WEST CLIFF DRIVE

As seen on Figure 2-3-B, the project site is part of the view of existing development along Beach Street as seen from West Cliff Drive. As with the view from the Wharf, existing development forms a wall of structures extending from Pacific Avenue to just east of the project site. The upper limits are on Beach Hill northwest of the project site. The proposed new building will be larger than the existing onsite structures, but will continue to be within the overall massing that currently is established by existing development. The top of the rear northwest portion of the proposed hotel will be slightly taller than the remainder of the building, but will not extend above the roofline plane created by existing development in the area. Furthermore, as indicated above, the scale of the proposed hotel appears similar to or less than that of the Cocoanut Grove to the east. The new building will not extend above existing tree or ridge lines. Thus, the project will not substantially degrade the scenic views available from West Cliff Drive.

OTHER VIEWS

As seen on Figure 2-3-C, the project site is part of the distant view as seen from the blufftop at Ocean View Park. However, the view is dominated by the San Lorenzo River, existing tree cover, and existing development in the Beach Flats area in the foreground. The Dream Inn and the existing La Bahia structure are visible as part of the background view, with the Dream Inn being more prominent. The proposed hotel will be larger than the existing onsite structures, but will not substantially expand the area of building mass that currently exists. The new construction will not be a prominent visual feature from this location, and thus will not substantially alter a scenic view.

Figure 2-3-D shows views from the Main Beach. The beach area is not mapped as having scenic viewpoints, although location of the beach on the Bay places it in a scenic location. For most of the distance along the Main Beach, the project site is blocked from view and, as shown in Figure 2-3-D, the proposed hotel at the La Bahia site will not extend above existing development and will not be visible.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required, as a significant impact has not been identified.

Impact 4.1-2: Scenic Resources

The proposed project will result in tree removal and demolition of a locally designated historic structure, but neither the trees nor the structure in its current condition are considered scenic resources. Thus, this is considered a *less-than-significant impact*.

The proposed project will result in demolition of most of the existing La Bahia structure, except for the bell tower and the southeastern portion of the building. The City's General Plan 2030 EIR indicates that an impact would be potentially significant if it eliminated or substantially affected visually prominent trees or historic-landmark buildings that would be considered a scenic resource. (The project site is not located adjacent to a state highway and will not affect scenic resources along a highway.) While the existing La Bahia structure is a locally-designated historic building, it is not visually prominent from a wide area. Past historic analyses have indicated that the "character-defining" features consist of the buildings along Beach Street and the interior courtyards. The existing bell tower, which is considered the most distinctive visual feature of the building, will be retained, as will the southeastern portion of the building along Beach Street. The courtyards are not visible from public vantage points.

Determination of aesthetic values is somewhat subjective, but generally the existing buildings are somewhat simple in design and also in a state of disrepair, as can be seen in Figure 2-1. Given its current deteriorating condition, the existing La Bahia complex is not considered a scenic resource, other than the prominent bell tower feature, which will be retained. The existing building is not mapped as a visual landmark in either the City's LCP or General Plan, and its current condition could be seen as detracting from the scenic quality as viewed from the immediate area. Therefore, demolition would not be considered an impact to a local scenic resource. (See also the HISTORICAL RESOURCES (4.2) section of this EIR for further discussion of historical resource impacts.)

There are 15 trees on the project site, including four along Beach Street at the corner of Westbrook, and the remaining trees are within the existing interior courtyards and at the corner of Westbrook and First Streets. The trees are not large and are horticultural species. Several are only slightly taller than the two-story height of the existing building. There are four palm trees – two each on the southwest and southeast corner of Beach Street in the public right-of-way.

The proposed project will result in removal of 11 horticultural trees. The project landscaping plans indicate that the existing palm trees will be retained and protected during construction. The trees to be removed are not visually prominent or distinctive trees, and therefore are not considered scenic features or resources. Thus, removal of these horticultural trees adjacent to the existing building will not result in a significant impact to scenic resources.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required, as a significant impact has not been identified.

Effects on Visual Character of Surrounding Area

Impact 4.1-3: Visual Effects on Surrounding Area

The proposed project will result in construction of a new building in a developed area, but it is of similar scale and mass as other structures in the area and will not result in a substantial degradation to the visual character of the surrounding area. Thus, this is considered a *less-than-significant impact*.

The proposed project will result in construction of a new hotel with greater building height, mass, and scale than currently exists on the site. The hotel will be stepped up the slope from Beach Street to First Street, with an enclosed and partially underground parking garage. The project will reach heights of 43 feet, which would be permissible with approval of a Planned Development Permit. The height limit in the RTC zone district is three stories and 36 feet, but the Planned Development regulations permit a height increase of up to one story or 20 percent of the allowed height. The building height has been calculated in accordance with Zoning Code regulations, and City staff has confirmed they are correct.

Figures 2-3-E through 2-3-H show photosimulations of the project from the four corners of the property. From these vantage points, the building generally appears as a three-story building, which is consistent with other three-story buildings in the neighborhood, including buildings along First Street. The overall scale as seen from these streets and adjacent areas would not appear massive in relation to other existing buildings in the area--i.e., the Casa Blanca Inn to the west of Main Street. (It should be noted that the tallest portion of the Casa Blanca Inn measures four stories from the sidewalk level.) Additionally, the overall building mass is broken up by architectural treatments, including punched-out windows, decks, and overhangs. Thus, the project's mass and scale would not be out of character with the immediate area.

While the proposed hotel's height appears as a three-story building from neighboring streets, the full height of the building is apparent from views from the Wharf and East Cliff Drive as reviewed above under Impact 1-1. As discussed, the overall scale of the proposed hotel is similar to that of the Cocoanut Grove building to the southeast of the project site, and the project massing is consistent with the structural massing created by existing development that steps up the gentle slope from Beach Street. Additionally, the building height is not out of scale with existing development as viewed from Beach Street west of the project site (see Figure 2-3-I).

The portion of the building to be retained will be rehabilitated. The new design is in keeping with the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style required pursuant to the B/SOL Plan Design Guidelines. While City staff will provide a thorough review of project with the Design Guidelines as part of the staff report for the project, a preliminary review by City Planning Department staff indicates that the project is consistent with applicable guidelines, including the key requirements set forth for the architectural style in the Design Guidelines and in the RTC zone district. The only guideline that is not met is the minimum 15 foot floor to ceiling height for street level commercial spaces as the project proposes 12 feet. This exception is part of the PD Permit request. The proposed architectural treatment includes punched-out windows, stucco walls, balconies, trellises, and decorative tile. Recessed doors and windows have been incorporated in keeping with the traditional Spanish Colonial Revival architecture. The stucco is

a warm off-white color. Parapet design incorporates geometric, curvilinear, decorative metalwork in the parapet walls, along with a cast stone parapet caps. New terra cotta tile roofs match the original roof color and blend with the original building. Hipped roofs are included on the new Beach Street addition, and the existing La Bahia tile roof will be repaired. Stained cedar will be utilized for trellisses, and aluminum windows will be painted in a brown finish. The historic resources review also indicates that the new building provides a differentiation from the retained historic building, while retaining some of the design elements of the historic structure. (See also the HISTORICAL RESOURCES (4.2) section of this EIR for further discussion of historical resource impacts.)

It is also noted that both the B/SOL Area Plan envisioned a project on the La Bahia site that would likely go to four stories in height to develop a quality hotel, given limitations of the existing height limit of 36 feet. For example, the existing zoning regulations require a minimum floor-to-floor height of 15 feet with a 36-foot height limit. Additionally, as indicated above, the stated goal for the Beach Area in the B/SOL Plan Design Guidelines is to “Recapture the former Ocean Resort grandeur, character and scale through intensification of tourist-oriented development that promotes year-round activities in the Beach area.” One of the objectives is to “encourage improvements to lodging facilities, including development of a quality, full-service, hotel conference facility and redevelopment of older facilities.” To this end, one specific guideline encourages multi-level development “to enhance the grand resort character of the area.”

Overall, the building scale and mass are consistent with existing development in the Beach area, and would not result in a substantial degradation to the visual character of the surrounding area. The proposed project also appears to be consistent with the objectives and architectural direction set forth in the B/SOL Plan Design Guidelines.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required, as a significant impact has not been identified.

Creation of Light or Glare

Impact 4.1-4: Creation of Light or Glare

The proposed project will not introduce substantial new sources of lighting or surfaces that would create glare. This is considered a *less-than-significant impact*.

The proposed project is located in the developed Beach area of the City, where street and structural lighting exists in addition to lighting at the Boardwalk during periods of evening operations. The proposed project will have facility and security lighting, but a specific lighting plan has not yet been developed. At this time, there are no detailed plans for lighting of the project structures. However, according to the project landscaping plan, exterior lighting will capture soft glows and accent significant features and elements of the courtyards, while maintaining adequate levels for safety. Exterior lighting will be shielded down to prevent creation of glare.

The B/SOL Area Plan includes Design Guidelines that address lighting to ensure that exterior lighting will not create increased light or glare on adjacent properties. Lighting in accordance with these guidelines will not create significant visual impacts on the surrounding neighborhood, because these standards specifically require lighting to be shielded, directed downward, and oriented and selected so as not create offsite glare. Specifically, the Guidelines state that:

- Building illumination and architectural lighting shall be indirect and concealed from view. Decorative building and landscape lighting shall be subtle.
- All exterior lighting shall be shielded to confine light within the site and prevent glare onto adjacent properties or streets.

The surfaces will be stucco in warm-toned white colors, and the hotel parking lot will be enclosed and partially underground. Thus, the project would not create reflective surfaces that would result in a new source of substantial glare.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required, as a significant impact has not been identified.

Creation of Shadows

Impact 4.1-5: Creation of Shadows

The proposed project buildings will cast shadows for limited times during the year that could somewhat affect adjacent uses, but due to the relatively short period of time, this is considered a *less-than-significant impact*.

Shadows cast from the proposed building would somewhat affect adjacent uses to the east for limited times during the year. Shade and shadow pertains to the blockage of direct sunlight by onsite buildings, affecting adjacent properties. Shading can be an important environmental issue because the users or occupants of certain land uses--such as residential, recreational, churches, schools, and outdoor restaurants--sometimes have expectations for some direct sunlight and warmth from the sun.

Shadow lengths are dependent on the height and size of the structure or vegetation from which they are cast, and the angle of the sun. The angle of the sun varies with respect to the rotation of the earth (i.e., time of day) and elliptical orbit (i.e., change in seasons). The longest shadows are cast during the winter months and the shortest shadows are cast during the summer months. Shadows move gradually from the northwest to the northeast as the sun moves across the sky during the day. The closer the time is to noon, either before or after, the shorter the shadows, because at noon the sun is approximately at its highest point.

Shadow simulations provided by the project architect are included on Figures 2-4-A through 2-4-C and illustrate the extent of shadows that would be created by the proposed structure during the spring/fall equinox period and the summer/winter solstice periods. During the equinox dates of March 20th and September 21st, when the sun is mid-way between the winter and summer solstices, the effects of shadows from the proposed project are similar. As shown on Figure 2-4-A, shadowing during the morning hours (10 AM) would occur on First Street and on a

portion of Main Street without significantly affecting existing residences. The late afternoon shadowing would be cast on Westbrook Street and could extend over the Coastview Inn parking lot.

June 21 represents the longest sunlight day of the year and the point at which the sun is the highest. During both the morning (10 AM) and afternoon (4 PM) hours, shadows would be cast in onto adjacent streets, but would not extend onto adjacent properties as shown on Figure 2-4-B. Shadows cast during the winter months are the longest and represent the most severe shadow conditions. Shadow impacts for 10 AM and 4 PM on December 21 are shown in Figure 2-4-C. Shadows cast by the proposed hotel in the morning (10 am) would extend northwesterly over First Street, but would not extend onto the residential properties north of First Street. The late afternoon shadow (4 PM) represents conditions approximately an hour before sunset. In the late afternoon, shadows would extend northeasterly over a portion of the Coastview Inn, and the swimming pool would be affected by the evening shadow, as well.

New shadows as a result of the proposed project would be limited, with most of the net new shadowing occurring on First Street, portions of Main Street and Westbrook Street, and on the Coastview Inn. Due to the change in the angle/direction of shadows cast throughout the day, however, the affected streets would not have shadows cast on them all day. In the most extreme condition, during the winter months, the Coastview Inn would be affected by the shadows. The Coastview Inn swimming pool would be affected by shadows during late afternoon/evening periods during some spring, fall, and winter months, but not during the peak summer season. However, due to this relatively short period of time, this is considered a less-than-significant impact. It is also noted that the Coastview Inn has submitted a permit application to the City to construct an addition to the existing building that includes an enclosed pool area, as well as three new rooms (one being a manager's unit), and a new lobby, office and breakfast area.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required, as a significant impact has not been identified.