

4.2 AESTHETICS

This section describes and evaluates the potential impacts to aesthetics associated with the proposed project.

4.2.1 EXISTING SETTING RELATED TO AESTHETICS

4.2.1.1 Visual Character

The project site is located in the northeastern portion of the City of Santa Ana and is bounded by commercial uses to the northeast, the parking structure of the Ameriquest office building to the north, Lawson Way to the east, and City Place to the south and west. City Place consists of a mixed use development with a total of approximately 57,700 square feet of commercial uses, including restaurant and retail uses, and 73 live/work residential units and 112 town homes. East of Lawson Way to the northeast of the project site are commercial uses. East and southeast of the project site, east of Lawson Way, is the Town & Country Manor Retirement Center.

Commercial, retail, and residential uses are found in the project vicinity along Main Street, Town and Country Road, and South Parker Street. Main Street is one of the primary commercial corridors in Santa Ana and is largely developed with low to high intensity commercial and retail uses in the immediate project area. For example, Westfield MainPlace Mall and the Orange Town Center (a retail center) are found along Main Street between Memory Lane and West La Veta Avenue. The Meridian Apartments, Ameriquest building and parking structure, and other commercial uses are along Town and Country Road. Additional commercial uses can be found along South Parker Street. In addition, a park is located within a one-mile radius of the project site. Specifically, Santiago Park is located south of the project site along Memory Lane and South Parker Street.

Buildings in the project vicinity range from one to 16 stories tall, with a wide variety of architectural styles. For example, City Place, the Ameriquest building, and Westfield MainPlace Mall have a postmodern architectural style, whereas other commercial and residential uses in the immediate project area have International and Spanish revival architectural styles, respectively.

The project site, which is currently undeveloped, is flat with an approximate 0.6 percent grade. Figure 4.2-1 shows the view point locations of photographs taken of and from the project site. Figure 4.2-2 provides photographs of existing views from these view point locations of the site and surrounding land uses.

View 1

This view is taken from the southeastern corner of the Meridian Apartments looking southeast across Town and Country Road to the western part of the project site. The west side of the Ameriquest parking structure is in the left of the view beyond the parking lot. Landscaping separates this parking lot from the sidewalk along Town and Country Road. Trees in the parking lot are evenly spaced apart, providing some shade. The town homes under construction at City Place are behind the Ameriquest parking structure and southwest of the project site. Santiago Park is directly south of the project site located in the background of the view.



Source: P&D Consultants (2007).

Figure 4.2-1
Location of View Points On- and Off-Site



View 1
From Town and Country Road looking southeast toward the project site.



View 2
From the northwestern corner of Main Street and Memory Lane looking northeast toward the project site.

Figure 4.2-2
Existing Views (page 1 of 6)



View 3
From Santiago Park (west bridge) next to a playground, looking northeast toward the project site.



View 4
From Santiago Park next to a playground, looking northeast toward the project site.

Figure 4.2-2
Existing Views (page 2 of 6)



View 5
 From Santiago Park (entrance) at the East Memory Lane and Lawson Way intersection, looking northwest toward the project site.

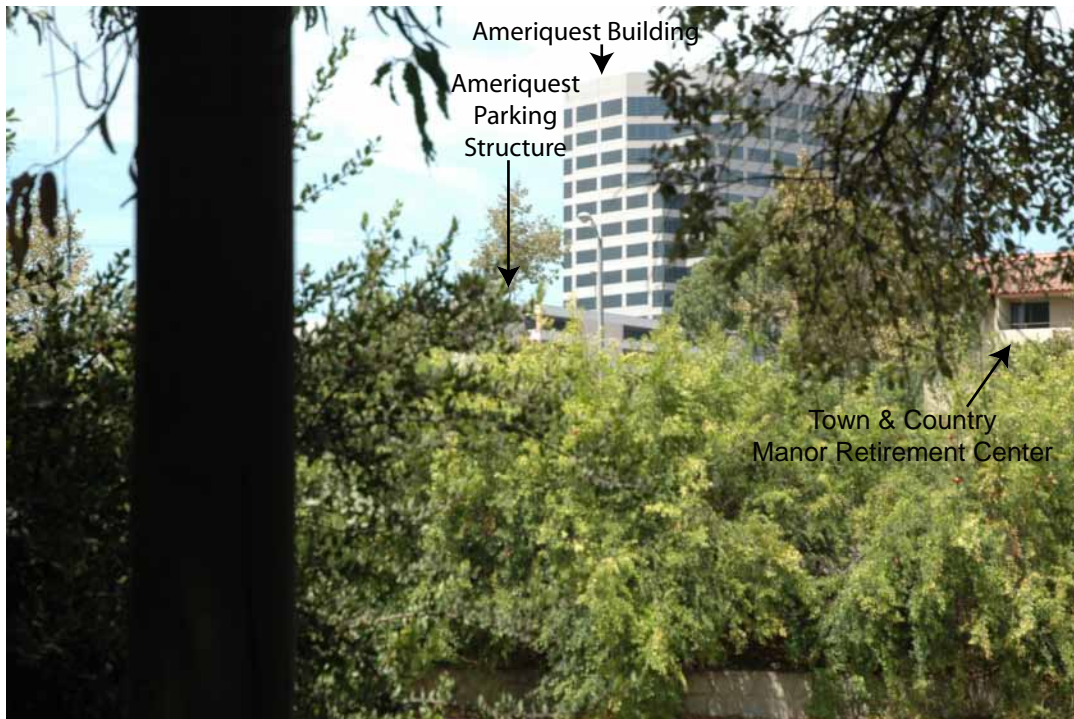


View 6
 From Santiago Park next to Santiago Creek and near Santiago Park Lawn Bowling Center, looking northwest toward the project site.

Figure 4.2-2
Existing Views (page 3 of 6)



View 7
From Santiago Park Lawn Bowling Center, looking northwest toward the project site.



View 8
From Santiago Park at the north edge of a lawn bowling court, looking northwest toward the project site.

Figure 4.2-2
Existing Views (page 4 of 6)



View 9
From Santiago Park north of the tennis courts, looking northwest toward the project site.



View 10
From Town & Country Manor Retirement Center parking lot facing west toward the project site.

Figure 4.2-2
Existing Views (page 5 of 6)



View 11
From the northeast corner of the project site, looking southwest toward City Place and Wells Fargo Bank.



View 12
From the northwest corner of the project site, looking southeast toward the Town & Country Manor Retirement Center.

Figure 4.2-2
Existing Views (page 6 of 6)

View 2

This view is from off-site at the northwestern corner of Main Street and Memory Lane near the Wells Fargo Bank, looking northeast toward the project site. City Place is located in the center of the photograph with the Ameriquest building and parking structure visible directly behind it. The Westfield MainPlace Mall, located further north along Main Street beyond this view point, faces the project site.

View 3

This view is from off-site at the northwest corner of Santiago Park on a bridge next to a playground, looking northeast toward the project site. City Place is located in the far right of the photograph with the Ameriquest building visible directly behind it.

View 4

This view is from off-site at the northwest side of Santiago Park next to the same playground in View 3, looking northeast toward the project site. An opening through the trees of the park reveals City Place in the center of the view, with the Ameriquest building located behind it.

View 5

This view is taken from off-site at the Santiago Park entrance at the East Memory Lane and Lawson Way intersection, looking northwest toward the project site. An opening through the trees of the park shows dwelling units in City Place in the front of the view, with the Ameriquest building located behind them to the right. The project site, which is between the Ameriquest building and City Place, is not visible in this view.

View 6

This view is from off-site at the Santiago Park next to Santiago Creek and near the Santiago Park Bowling Center, looking northwest toward the project site. The Ameriquest parking structure is visible through an opening of the trees in the center-left of the photograph, with the Ameriquest building located behind in the right of the view. Part of the Town & Country Manor Retirement Center on Lawson Way can be seen in the right of the view in front of the Ameriquest building.

View 7

This view is taken from the Santiago Park Lawn Bowling Center, looking northwest toward the project site. Beyond a lawn bowling court and through an opening of the trees of Santiago Park, the Ameriquest parking structure and building can be seen in the right of the photograph.

View 8

This view is from Santiago Park at the north edge of a lawn bowling court, looking northwest toward the project site. The Ameriquest parking structure and building can be seen in the right-center of the view, through an opening of the trees of Santiago Park. In addition, the Town & Country Manor Retirement Center is visible in the right of the view, through an opening of the trees.

View 9

This view is from Santiago Park north of the tennis courts, looking northwest toward the project site. Beyond the chain-link fence and through an opening of the trees, the Ameriquest building is visible in the right of the photograph. Also, a portion of the Town & Country Manor Retirement Center can be seen in the right of this view through the trees.

View 10

This view is from off-site in the parking lot of the Town & Country Manor Retirement Center on Lawson Way, looking northwest toward the project site. The project site is located in the center of the photograph, with the Ameriquest parking structure directly to the right of the project site, and the town homes under construction at City Place in the left of the view. Hedges and trees are uniformly spaced throughout the parking lot of the retirement center, softening the urban landscape with moderate vegetation. The Orange Town Center is visible in the background of the view.

View 11

This view is from the northeast corner of the project site, looking southwest toward City Place and the Wells Fargo Bank at Main Street. Construction equipment and a construction trailer for City Place currently occupy the project site. The town homes under construction at City Place are in the center of the photograph, with the Wells Fargo Bank on the west side of Main Street located behind them in the left of the view.

View 12

This view is from the northwest corner of the project site, looking southeast toward the Town & Country Manor Retirement Center. Similar to View 5, construction equipment for City Place currently occupies the project site. The Town & Country Manor Retirement Center is visible beyond the chain link fence at the east side of the project site. Mature trees and grass are visible at the front entrance to the retirement center.

4.2.1.2 Existing Shade/Shadow Patterns

The tallest building in the project vicinity is the Ameriquest building. The Ameriquest building is 16-stories tall and casts shadow primarily on surrounding commercial and retail uses throughout the year. It also casts shadow on residential uses for two hours in the morning during the winter (December 21). Shadows cast by the Ameriquest building are shown later in Figures 4.2-5 through 4.2-8 along with shadows cast by the proposed project to provide comparison of existing and with-project shadows. Text describing these is provided in Section 4.2.4.2 (Shade/Shadow Impacts).

Currently, there are no existing buildings located on the project site. Therefore, no shadows are cast from the project site onto nearby land uses.

4.2.2 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE RELATED TO AESTHETICS

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, implementation of the proposed project would result in a significant adverse impact on the environment related to aesthetics if it would:

- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

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

4.2.3 METHODOLOGY RELATED TO AESTHETICS

To determine the visual impacts related to the proposed project, sensitive viewers were identified who could potentially have views of the proposed project. These sensitive viewers include viewers from residential uses and parks. Existing views of the proposed project from these sensitive land uses were compared with the views anticipated with the implementation of the proposed project. Visual simulations of the proposed project were provided by the project architect. These visual simulations were used to analyze the impacts of the proposed project on nearby uses. A shade and shadow analysis was additionally prepared to determine the differences in shade and shadow patterns between existing conditions and conditions following project implementation.

To determine the impacts of the proposed project related to light and glare, uses sensitive to light and glare in the vicinity of the proposed project were identified and analyzed. These sensitive uses include nearby residential uses and parks. The existing sources and amounts of light and glare on the project site were compared with the amount of light and glare that would occur permanently with implementation of the proposed project.

4.2.4 IMPACTS RELATED TO AESTHETICS

4.2.4.1 Visual Character Impacts

As shown previously in View Points 1 through 12, the visual character of the project site is an empty lot, temporarily being used for storage of construction equipment for City Place, surrounded by commercial, retail, open space, and residential land uses. The proposed project consists of a 27-story residential tower, four levels of two-story town homes and a parking structure. Figures 4.2-3 and 4.2-4 show visual simulations of the proposed project. The residential tower is designed in a postmodern architectural style, with a sleek and contemporary appearance. The following discussion provides a description of the views from each view point, previously shown on Figures 4.2-1 and 4.2-2, following implementation of the proposed project.

View 1

From this view point, the proposed 27-story residential tower would be visible in the center of the photograph, and would block the view of some of the City Place town homes. Commercial land uses would be visible in the left side of the view. City Place would be partially seen in the right of the view.

View 2

The proposed residential tower and part of the four levels of two-story town homes would be visible in the right of this view. The residential components of City Place would be visible within the entire expanse of this view, as it would be directly in front of the proposed project. Some of the right side of the Ameriquest building and part of the Ameriquest parking structure would be blocked by the proposed project.



Town Homes


NORTH
Not To Scale

Source: Steven Ehrlich Architects (2007).

Figure 4.2-3
Visual Simulation 1



NORTH
Not To Scale

Source: Steven Ehrlich Architects (2007).

Figure 4.2-4
Visual Simulation 2

View 3

From this view point, the proposed 27-story residential tower would be visible in the right of the photograph, and would block the view of the Ameriquest building. The residential components of City Place would be visible in the right of this view, as these components would be directly in front of the proposed project.

View 4

From this view point, the proposed residential tower would be seen in the right of the photograph and would block the view of the Ameriquest building. Similar to View 3, the residential components of City Place would be visible in the center of this view through the opening of trees in the Santiago Park, as they would be directly in front of the proposed project.

View 5

The proposed residential tower would be seen in the center of this photograph behind the City Place town homes. Similar to View 2, residential components of City Place would be visible within the entire expanse of this view. The tower would block the view of most of the Ameriquest building.

View 6

From this view point, beyond the Santiago Creek and trees of the Santiago Park, the proposed 27-story residential tower would be visible in the center of the photograph. The proposed residential tower would block the Ameriquest parking structure and most of the Ameriquest building. A portion of the Town & Country Manor Retirement Center would remain visible in the right of this view.

View 7

The proposed 27-story residential tower would be visible in the center of the photograph through an opening of the trees in Santiago Park. The proposed residential tower would block the Ameriquest parking structure and most of the Ameriquest building.

View 8

From this view point, the proposed residential tower would be seen in the left of the photograph through an opening of the trees in Santiago Park. Similar to View 7, the proposed residential tower would block the Ameriquest parking structure and most of the Ameriquest building. A portion of the Town & Country Manor Retirement Center would remain visible in the right of this view.

View 9

The proposed 27-story residential tower would be visible in the right of the photograph through an opening of the trees in Santiago Park. The residential tower would block the view of the Ameriquest building. A portion of the Town & Country Manor Retirement Center would still be seen in the right of this view through an opening of the trees.

View 10

From this view point, the proposed 27-story residential tower, four levels of two-story town homes, and the parking structure would be visible in the center of this photograph. Some residential components of City Place to the left of the view, and the Orange Town Center located in the center-right of the view would be blocked by the proposed project.

View 11

This view point is taken from the project site. The City Place town homes in this view that face the project site will have close views of the proposed tower. The parking garage, town homes, and tower of the proposed project would be seen from the area of the retirement center shown in this view.

View 12

This view is taken from the project site looking toward the Town & Country Manor Retirement Center. The parking garage, town homes, and tower of the proposed project would be seen from the area of the retirement center shown in this view.

Visual Character Impact Summary

As discussed above for Views 1 through 12, views of the existing project site would be altered with project implementation. The project site would change from an empty lot to a postmodern high-rise residential development consisting of a 27-story residential tower; four levels of two-story town homes; four above-grade parking and two below-grade parking levels; and an amenity deck (Podium Level). Although the 27-story residential tower would be 11 stories taller than the tallest structure in the area (the Ameriquest building), the proposed project would blend in with adjacent buildings, as it would have similar architectural style. For example, the proposed project has a postmodern architectural style which would complement the postmodern architectural style of City Place and the Ameriquest building. The proposed project would thus not degrade the visual character surrounding the project site as it would be aesthetically compatible with the existing surrounding land uses. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in significant impacts related to visual character.

Although impacts related to visual character would be less than significant, mitigation measure AS-1 has been included to minimize any potential visual impacts related to above-ground utilities.

4.2.4.2 Shade/Shadow Impacts

The proposed 27-story residential building and parking structure would generate shade over a wider area than existing site shade patterns because there is no shade currently cast from the project site. Figures 4.2-5 through Figure 4.2-8, show the patterns generated by the proposed residential tower and parking structure and also existing shadow patterns for the Ameriquest building for the spring, summer, fall, and winter, respectively.

Below is a discussion of the shade and shadow impacts on nearby uses organized by season and time ranges, as depicted in Figures 4.2-5 through 4.2-8.

22 FWY

TOWN & COUNTRY ROAD

S PARKER ST



MAIN STREET

CITY PLACE

LAWSON WAY

E MEMORY LN.

KEY

RESIDENTIAL USES IN SHADOW

— AMERIQUEST BUILDING

— CITY PLACE SKY LOFTS

NTS

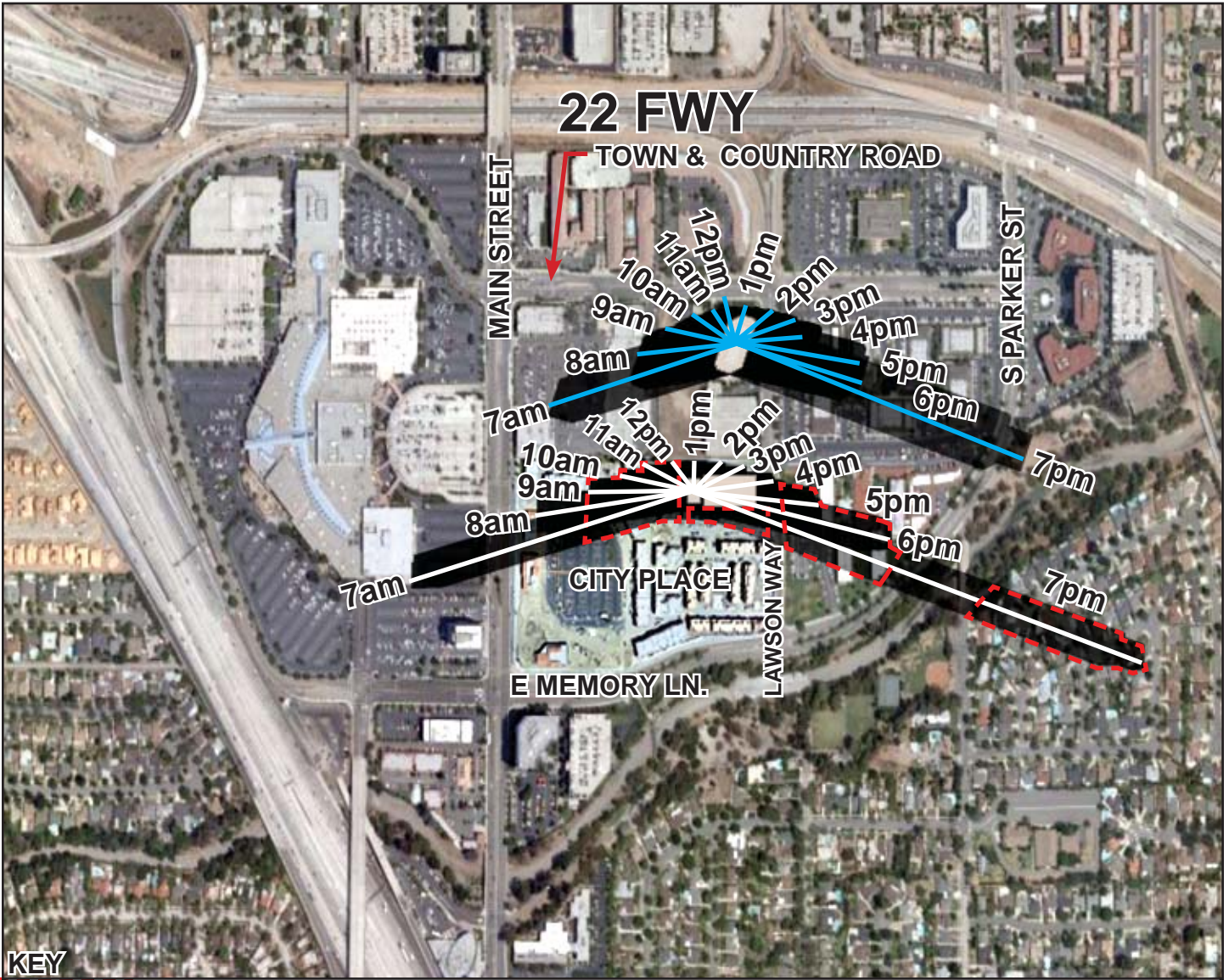


NORTH

Source: SHADOW ANALYSIS; P&D Consultants (2007)

Figure 4.2-5
Spring Shadow Study
March 20

City Place Sky Lofts



KEY

RESIDENTIAL USES IN SHADOW

AMERIQUEST BUILDING

CITY PLACE SKY LOFTS

NTS



Source: SHADOW ANALYSIS; P&D Consultants (2007)

Figure 4.2-6
Summer Shadow Study
June 1



KEY

RESIDENTIAL USES IN SHADOW

— AMERIQUEST BUILDING

— CITY PLACE SKY LOFTS

NTS



Source: SHADOW ANALYSIS; P&D Consultants (2007)

Figure 4.2-7
Fall Shadow Study
September 23

City Place Sky Lofts



KEY

RESIDENTIAL USES IN SHADOW

AMERIQUEST BUILDING

CITY PLACE SKY LOFTS

NTS



Source: SHADOW ANALYSIS; P&D Consultants (2007)

Figure 4.2-8
Winter Shadow Study
December 21

City Place Sky Lofts

Spring (March 20) Shadow Impacts (Figure 4.2-5)

- 7:30 A.M.-8:30 A.M. Shadow would be cast across Main Street and into the parking lot of Westfield MainPlace Mall and a portion of the main entrance to this mall. In addition, some of the live/work units and town homes of City Place would be cast in shadow.
- 8:30 A.M.-12:00 P.M. The proposed 27-story residential tower would cast a shadow on a portion of the live/work units of City Place. Also, a shadow would be cast on the commercial center and the parking lot of the commercial center located directly north of the project site.
- 12:00 P.M.-3:30 P.M. Commercial buildings and their respective parking lots located north of the proposed project along Town and Country Road would be cast in shadow.
- 3:30 P.M.-6:00 P.M. Commercial buildings and their respective parking lots along Lawson Way located northeast of the proposed project would be cast in shadow.
- 6:00 P.M.-6:30 P.M. The Town & Country Manor Retirement Center directly across the street from the project site along Lawson Way would be cast in shadow. Also, a portion of Santiago Park east of South Parker Street would be shaded.

Summer (June 1) Shadow Impacts (Figure 4.2-6)

- 6:30 A.M.-8:00 A.M. Shadow would be cast across Main Street and into the parking lot of Westfield MainPlace Mall. In addition, some of the live/work units and town homes of City Place would be cast in shadow.
- 8:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M. The proposed 27-story residential tower would cast a shadow on some of the live/work units and town homes of City Place.
- 4:00 P.M.-6:00 P.M. The Town & Country Manor Retirement Center directly across the street from the project site along Lawson Way would be cast in shadow.
- 6:00 P.M.-7:00 P.M. Shadows would be cast on the Town & Country Manor Retirement Center and on residential uses along Santiago Street, Clemensen Avenue, E. Jonquil Road, and Oakmont Avenue. The proposed project would also cast shadow on some of the town homes of City Place.

Fall Shadow (September 23) Impacts (Figure 4.2-7)

- 7:30 A.M.-8:30 A.M. Shadow would be cast across Main Street and into the parking lot of Westfield MainPlace Mall and a portion of the main entrance to this mall. In addition, live/work units and town homes of City Place would be cast in shadow.
- 8:30 A.M.-10:30 A.M. Shadow would be cast on some town homes in City Place as well as on the commercial buildings and their parking lots west of the project site.
- 10:30 A.M.-11:30 A.M. The proposed project would cast a shadow on the commercial center and its parking lot northwest of the proposed project.

- 11:30 A.M.-5:30 P.M. Commercial buildings and their respective parking lots located east and west of Lawson Way and northeast of the proposed project would be cast in shadow.
- 5:30 P.M.-6:30 P.M. The Town & Country Manor Retirement Center directly across the street from the project site along Lawson Way would be cast in shadow. Additionally, shadow would be cast on Santiago Park east of South Parker Street.

Winter (December 21) Shadow Impacts (Figure 4.2-8)

- 7:30 A.M.-9:00 A.M. The proposed 27-story residential tower would cast a shadow on some of the live/work units and town homes of City Place. Also, the commercial center and the parking lot of the commercial center located directly northwest of the proposed project, along with a portion of the parking lot of the Westfield MainPlace Mall would be cast in shadow.
- 9:00 A.M.-10:00 A.M. Shadow would be cast on some town homes in City Place as well as on the commercial center and its parking lot directly northwest of the project site.
- 10:00 A.M.-3:30 P.M. The commercial buildings and parking lots/structures east and west of Lawson Way and northwest, north and northeast of the proposed project would be cast in shadow.
- 3:30 P.M.-4:30 P.M. Shadows would be cast on residential uses located north of the 22 Freeway. In addition, commercial uses located east and west of Lawson Way and north and south of Town and Country Road would be cast in shadow.

Shade/Shadow Impact Summary

Spring, fall, and winter shade patterns would extend west of Main Street and to the east of South Parker Street. On the other hand, summer shade patterns would extend to the west of Main Street and southeast of Memory Lane. Shade from the proposed project would be cast on a retirement center east of the project site and on residential uses west, northeast, south and southeast of the project site, as well as park uses which are not shaded by existing site features as shown previously in Figures 4.2-5 through 4.2-8. It should be noted that commercial, office, and retail uses are not considered sensitive to additional shading. The Town & Country Manor Retirement Center directly across the street from the project site along Lawson Way, the residential uses located north of the 22 Freeway, southeast of Memory Lane, and within City Place, and Santiago Park would be considered sensitive to additional amounts of shade. These areas would receive more shade at various times of the year, as described earlier, as the shadow cast by the project residential building and parking structure moves as the sun moves in the sky. This additional shading would substantially reduce the visual quality of the residential and park uses that are shaded by the project and would be a significant adverse impact.

4.2.4.3 Light and Glare Impacts

The project site is in an urban setting and is surrounded by existing on-street lighting. Light associated with the proposed residential tower and parking structure would add to the amount of existing light on and near the project site. Sources of light would include outdoor lighting and light from windows in the residential tower and town homes, and nighttime security lighting for the parking structure. This additional light would be potentially significant.

Implementation of the proposed project could result in additional glare from sunlight reflecting off of glare-producing building materials. This impact would be potentially significant.

4.2.5 MITIGATION RELATED TO AESTHETICS

Although impacts of the proposed project related to visual character are less than significant, mitigation measure AS-1 has been included to reduce potential visual impacts related to above-ground utilities.

- AS-1 All above-ground utilities shall, unless technically infeasible, be located within the 2.008-acre project site, and not on adjoining public right-of-way. The project Applicant shall screen these utilities from the public right-of-way, and shall grant appropriate easements to the affected utility. This mitigation would apply to electricity, phone, cable TV, gas, and water utilities.
- AS-2 The project proponent will ensure that all outdoor lighting and fixtures, including lighting for construction, are shielded or designed and located to minimize nighttime light spillage onto adjacent uses. Outdoor fixtures will be designed to generate less than 0.25-foot candle power of light where possible and will direct lighting toward the interior of the project site.
- AS-3 Non-reflective materials shall be utilized to the extent feasible. Building site plans shall be reviewed and approved by the City Planning and Public Works Department.

4.2.6 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION RELATED TO AESTHETICS

Implementation of the proposed project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character of the site and its surroundings. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in significant impacts to visual character. However, mitigation measure AS-1 has been included to reduce potential visual impacts associated with above-ground utilities. Mitigation measure AS-1 requires that utilities are placed on the project site, as feasible, and screened from the public right-of-way.

Implementation of the proposed project would cast shadow on residential and park uses. Sensitive residential and park users would experience spring, summer, fall, and winter early morning, late afternoon, and early evening loss of sunlight. The affected users are the Town and County Retirement Manor, residential uses north of the 22 Freeway, southeast of Memory Lane, and in City Place and the Santiago Park. This loss of sunlight cannot be mitigated and would remain a significant adverse impact related to visual quality.

Implementation of mitigation measures AS-1 and AS-2 discussed above would reduce the potential impacts to light and glare to less than significant levels.