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## V. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

### A. AESTHETICS

#### 1. VISUAL IMPACTS

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##### ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

###### Existing Visual Character

The Project Site is located at 3911 South Figueroa Street, in the southwest corner of Exposition Park, in the South Central Los Angeles District Plan area of the City of Los Angeles. The site is situated in the central portion of the Los Angeles Basin, approximately 3.5 miles southwest of downtown Los Angeles. The 27.4-acre site is generally bounded by 39<sup>th</sup> Street on the north, Hoover Street on the east, Menlo Avenue on the west, and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on the south. The Los Angeles Swim Stadium<sup>1</sup> is located to the southwest of the Coliseum, while a surface parking lot and the Sports Arena are to the southeast. The existing improvements on the site consist of the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and numerous ancillary structures, such as concession stands, restrooms, ticket booths, and other facilities. The Coliseum itself, a reinforced concrete structure oriented in an east-west axis, is 1,038 feet long and 738 feet wide. The rim of the Coliseum is situated 114 feet above the field level, which, in turn, is situated 40 feet below the surrounding grade of the yard level (Main Concourse Level). The Coliseum's exterior wall rises 74 feet above the surrounding grade of the yard level. Figure IV.A-1 presents an aerial photograph of the Project Site and surrounding portions of Exposition Park and slightly beyond (see Section IV.A of this report, Overview of Environmental Setting).

As stated previously, existing development on the Project Site includes the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, a 92,500-person capacity outdoor, multi-purpose stadium utilized for a wide variety of public assembly and sporting events, and various ancillary structures scattered around the exterior wall of the stadium. General pedestrian access to the site from the surrounding portions of Exposition Park, including off-site parking areas, is currently accomplished via several gates through the 10-foot-high fence around the general perimeter of the site. Access to the internal seating area of the Coliseum is currently provided from both the yard (ground) level concourse, located within the perimeter fence but outside of and encircling the stadium itself, through a series of 28 tunnels, and from the concourse level, located within the Coliseum approximately 34 vertical feet above the yard level and accessed via stairways and escalators from the yard level. The uniform design of the seating bowl within the stadium is broken at its eastern end by the "Peristyle," a series of 15 arches extending at the yard level between the edges of the two banks of spectator seating. The seating in this portion of the stadium (east end) is bench type; all

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<sup>1</sup> The Los Angeles Swim Stadium is located within the Exposition Park Intergenerational Community Center (EPICC), which also houses a child care center, a clubhouse, and a senior center.

other seating in the Coliseum is individual theater-style. The uniformity of the stadium's rims is also broken at mid-field on the south side by a three-level (two stories and a roof platform) press box, which was added to the Coliseum in 1948. The press box is serviced by a private elevator from the yard level on the outside of the exterior wall. Vehicular access to the field level is provided via Tunnel 30, a ramp from Menlo Avenue extending beneath the Coliseum's superstructure at its southwest corner. Dressing and locker room facilities are accessed from this ramp and are located underground. Field lighting is currently provided from a series of floodlight towers located along and extending above the rims of the stadium.

The Coliseum is surrounded by a chain-link and steel bar fence approximately 10 feet in height. A total of 11 permanent concession stands, four restroom buildings, a concession storage building, a maintenance/equipment shed, and a security/police substation are located around the exterior of the Coliseum on the site within the fenced area and/or form a part of the fence perimeter itself. No aesthetic attempt was made at the time of construction to make the ancillary buildings compatible in design with the main stadium structure, as most are shed-like rectangular structures of modern design, constructed of concrete block, and framed with glass, wood, or metal sidings.

Landscaping on the site includes decorative trees and shrubs along the base of the berm including eucalyptus, deodar, yucca, agave, palm trees, and plants, along with several specimen tree species planted throughout Exposition Park. Most of the Park areas adjacent to the site, including the outer portions of the site beyond the perimeter fence, are landscaped with grass. Landscaping along the northern and eastern sides of the stadium provides a sense of continuity with the groupings of the larger Exposition Park complex. Landscaping on the south and west sides is more sparse and essentially isolated, due largely to the parking areas that dominate the open spaces on these frontages.

**Coliseum Interior.** The primary interior features of the stadium can be described as follows:

- The Coliseum's interior is an elliptical bowl that rises from a green (grass) playing field in an unbroken sweep to the stadium rim. The green color of the playing field varies during the year with the type of grass planted, either hybrid bermuda or bluegrass. When empty, the interior presents three tiers of seats, each in a colored band. The first (lowest) seating tier is russet-colored, the second tier is pink, while the third is russet again, except for the east Peristyle end which is equipped with grey benches. The seating bowl is interrupted by the Peristyle at the east end of the stadium and the press box situated along the south rim.
- The Peristyle is an important visual element within the stadium, contrasting, in its verticality and busy architectural features, with the bowl-like effect and simplicity of the stadium as a whole. The Peristyle consists of a large central arch, the Propylaeum, which is topped by a 150-foot-high (above ground level) concrete flame holder with a brass bowl, constructed and used for the Olympic torch in 1932. The central arch is flanked by seven smaller arches on each side. Two 40-foot-high, block-shaped towers, one housing a clock and the other a thermometer, stand at

either end of the Peristyle, facing the interior of the stadium and separating it from the stadium bowl. A concrete wall extends outward from the outside edge of each tower, further separating the seating from the Peristyle area. The Peristyle architecture is compromised by modern amenities added to the structure in subsequent years, including structural supports, a matrix scoreboard and a video board as well as two speakers attached to the Peristyle in the shape of large band boxes, their aesthetic qualities being subordinated to their functions. Below the Peristyle area, a tier of bench seating completes the continuity of the stadium's seating bowl. The surface of the Peristyle is a travertine veneer, that was added to the structure in the late 1960s. The ceiling of the Propylaeum supports a mural depicting a sun in an Aztec motif. Bronze plaques decorate the pillars of the Peristyle, and remind the viewer both of the individuals who had meaningful influence upon the stadium as well as of events that have taken place there.

- The south rim of the stadium contains the three-level press box, designed in a moderne, functional architectural style in steel and glass and added to the rim in 1948. The press box juts out over the stadium, conflicting aesthetically with the parabolic shape of the stadium. The press facility shares its superstructural effects with the light poles that hover above the stadium's south rim in that their design does not appear to coordinate with the aesthetics of the stadium. A series of 28 tunnels and numerous stairways penetrate the stadium at the yard level, leading to either the seats or to the concourse level which provides concessions and restrooms within the interior of the structure. When viewed from the interior of the stadium, the two rings of entrance tunnels tend to break up the smooth curve of the bowl, though they are an expected statement and could be viewed as architecturally enhancing. No particular aesthetic statements are made within the interiors of the entrance tunnels, stairways, or concourse level.

**Coliseum Exterior.** The exterior of the stadium presents an architectural style reminiscent of classical stadium architecture. Arched entranceways and window-like openings that suggest an arcade effect lend the flavor of the original Roman Colosseum without attempting to duplicate the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian qualities of the Roman facade. Exterior features of the Coliseum can be described as follows:

- The exterior of the stadium is a large concrete structure consisting of a continuous pilaster and panel wall system that extends over the top of an earthen berm. The top four rows of the stadium are cantilevered beyond the wall and supported by concrete brackets, that were added during the 1931 expansion (for a detailed description of changes to the Coliseum over time, see Section V.C, Cultural and Historical Resources).
- The Peristyle entrance on the stadium's east approach is less massive when compared to the height and mass presented by the rest of the exterior. Design and decor are different here as well, with the entrance consisting of 15 vaulted arches in a wall approximately 30 feet in height above the yard (ground) level. The Peristyle rises to a height of approximately 50 feet above the yard level at its center, where the Olympic torch stands. The Peristyle's white facade contrasts

markedly with the concrete-gray coloring of the rest of the exterior. The Peristyle is decorated with a neon sign reading “Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum,” with the five interlinked Olympic rings situated beneath. Two large pieces of rock, one from the Colosseum in Rome and the other from Altis Olympia in Greece, rest on bases to either side of the main arch. The rear of both the matrix scoreboard and the videoboard are prominently visible above the Peristyle. Two one-story office buildings, a ticket and accounting office on the north and the Coliseum Commission offices on the south, flank the Peristyle. These offices are designed in the style of 1930s Moderne architecture, consisting of smooth simplified exteriors, combining rounded and flat surfaces with a minimum of decoration. To either side of the Peristyle are the tower buildings, massive four-story structures with tall arched and vaulted doorways piercing the recessed front walls. A sculpture depicting the torsos of two athletes, added for the 1984 Olympics, is placed at the approach to the Peristyle at the edge of the site.

- Other prominent exterior features include on the Coliseum’s south facade: a Moderne-style press box elevator tower leading from the yard level to the press box on the south rim; Tunnel 30, a large entrance ramp and tunnel on the southwest side of the Coliseum to allow for vehicular access from Menlo Avenue to the playing field and track; a three-story reinforced concrete structure which extends out from the west wall of the stadium and is used as a storage building and a police substation.

**General Vicinity.** The site is located within the approximately 145-acre Exposition Park complex, which consists of several museums and exposition halls located north and northeast of the Project Site, as well as landscaped park areas, walkways, and tree-lined thoroughfares. The Park is bounded by Exposition Boulevard on the north, Figueroa Street on the east, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on the south, and Vermont Avenue on the west. Major public facilities within the Park include the California Science Center, the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, the African-American Museum, the LAUSD Armory School site, the Aerospace Museum, and the IMAX Theater. The southern half of Exposition Park is developed with sports- and assembly-related facilities. In addition to the Coliseum, two other permanent structures are located within this portion of the Park: the Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena in the southeast corner and the Los Angeles Swim Stadium in the southwest corner. Portions of the southern and southwestern areas of the Park are dedicated to surface parking lots. Exposition Park also extends westerly from Menlo Avenue to Vermont Avenue. This area is currently developed with a series of surface parking lots and additional open-space park facilities.

Other prominent land uses in the area outside of Exposition Park include the University of Southern California (USC) campus to the north, Manual Arts High School near the southwest corner of Vermont Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, and residential areas south of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and west of Vermont Avenue. The location of the USC campus adjacent to Exposition Park has effectively created a large public and quasi-public land reservation that dominates the vicinity and which is surrounded by the non-related residential and commercial land uses comprising the basic fabric

of the community. Structures on the USC campus include some high-rise (above six stories) buildings. The mix of land uses in the area contrasts distinctively with the uses contained in both Exposition Park and the USC campus. Exposition Park, while developed with a variety of public facilities, retains a bucolic, park-like quality that is removed from the modern architectural landscapes found to the north across Exposition Boulevard on the USC campus. However, while each of these publicly-oriented land use conglomerations differ substantially in visual character from each other, they each also differ greatly from the general character of the surrounding portions of the City of Los Angeles, generally comprised of the aging commercial, residential, and industrial neighborhoods. These neighborhoods, while somewhat segregated by land use, are largely homogeneous in appearance, without many visually distinctive features. Adjacent to Exposition Park on its eastern, southern, and western borders are mixed commercial and residential land uses. Most of the properties in these areas are developed with low-rise buildings and residences, with the exception of the mid-rise (four to six stories) Social Services Building on Vermont Avenue, approximately 0.25 mile west of the site. Areas to the east of Figueroa Street (the eastern boundary of Exposition Park) are developed with low-rise commercial retail structures. The land strip containing the elevated Harbor Freeway (Interstate 110) is located immediately to the east of these properties. Areas to the east of the Harbor Freeway in the vicinity of the Proposed Project are densely developed with a mix of multi-family residential, commercial, and light industrial uses.

In the general vicinity of the site, Vermont Avenue, Figueroa Street, and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard can be characterized as commercial corridors. Vermont Avenue provides access from the Coliseum area to the Mid-Wilshire District of Los Angeles on the north and to the South Bay cities of Gardena and Torrance to the south. Similarly, Figueroa Street provides direct surface-street access to Downtown Los Angeles to the north and the Los Angeles Harbor area to the south. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard is both a commercial and residential corridor to the west, providing access to the Baldwin Hills area, as well as to the Crenshaw District of Los Angeles. Development along each of these streets extending outward from the vicinity of the Proposed Project is primarily characterized by a highly urban mix of densely developed residential neighborhoods and strip commercial areas largely defined by low- and mid-rise structures. Industrial land uses are prominent to the east of the Harbor Freeway, although the general pattern of low visual relief characterizing the area is broken intermittently by high-rise industrial facilities. Exposition Boulevard, adjacent to the Park on the north and separating it from the USC campus, is generally characterized by commercial and light industrial uses to the west of Vermont Avenue and is situated parallel to a set of Southern Pacific railroad tracks. The Shrine Auditorium, a large mid-rise public assembly facility, is located to the northeast of the site, adjacent to the north edge of the USC campus. Overall, the high density of development in the greater project locale is characteristic of a major urban area, although not of an urban business center.

### **Viewsheds**

**Views From the Site.** In general, the aesthetic value of the area surrounding the Project Site relates primarily to its urban character rather than to any dominant natural feature. Low-level views from the

Project Site looking outward consist largely of the surrounding areas of Exposition Park, as well as the commercial and retail uses surrounding the Park to the south and west. Views from the site to the north and east are limited by the presence of the Museum of Natural History and the California Science Center, and the Sports Arena, respectively, as well as by vegetation and stands of trees within the open space portions of the Park. Similarly, views to the southwest from the south and southwest portions of the site are shielded by the Swim Stadium, located adjacent to the site on the southwest.

During periods of good air quality, the urban skyline of Downtown Los Angeles (approximately 3.5 miles east) is clearly visible from the rim of the Coliseum and the press box. The downtown skyline forms a backdrop against which the lower-relief urban development in the intervening areas may be seen. Intermittent views of the more distant San Gabriel Mountains beyond the downtown skyline may also be obtained from the Coliseum's rim during periods of exceptional air quality. Views to the north from the stadium rim consist of urban landscapes punctuated by the distant high-rise offices along the Wilshire Boulevard corridor (approximately five miles distant) and the more distant Santa Monica Mountains (Hollywood Hills). Similar views to the northwest can include, depending upon ambient air quality conditions, the Santa Monica Mountains extending west to the Pacific Ocean near Santa Monica (approximately 15 miles distant), although the ocean itself is not visible. Views to the west and southwest from the stadium rim consist of commercial and residential land uses extending west to the partially developed Baldwin Hills (approximately 3.5 miles distant). Views to the south are the least limited of any direction by topography, and can extend to the Palos Verdes Peninsula (approximately 12 miles distant) on clear days. The intervening areas are seen as a continuous blanket of low- and mid-rise urban land uses, punctuated by scattered high-rise structures, particularly in the vicinity of the Los Angeles International Airport (approximately six miles distant). In general, landscaping and vegetation is not a prominent part of the visual character of the region surrounding Exposition Park when seen from any position along the rim of the Coliseum. Rather, views in all four directions are characterized by heavily urban land uses.

It should be noted that existing vantage points from within the Project Site are limited to the yard (ground) level outside the Coliseum structure and the rim of the stadium itself, including the press box. No intermediate level exists from which the surrounding area may be viewed.

**Views Of the Site.** Viewsheds of the site are, in general, intensely urban, which tends to make their boundaries irregular. The site is visually prominent from non-adjacent vantage points on the west and south, although not from the north and east due to both the relatively low profile of the existing Coliseum and the trees and other landscaping scattered about the site and the adjacent portions of Exposition Park. In discussions of views of the site from regional vantage points, the classification of distance becomes very important. The foreground, middleground, and background views are all very distinct and different in nature from any particular viewpoint.

In general, views of the existing Coliseum are primarily foreground and middleground; few background views of the Coliseum are available from the general vicinity due primarily to its low profile and intervening landscaping and buildings. Only Hoover Street to the south affords a background view of the Coliseum; otherwise, the viewshed is primarily confined to the area generally bordered by Exposition Boulevard on the north, Figueroa Street on the east, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on the south, and Vermont Avenue on the west. The site is also visible from a southbound section of the Harbor Freeway. The stadium can be perceived as a unified whole at very few viewpoints, as the public views of the site are principally foreground and these views are seldom unobstructed. For most viewers approaching the stadium, from any direction, the Coliseum appears as a large structure immediately in front of them, the form of which is suggested by the circular sweep of its mass. The closer the viewer gets to the structure, the more this phenomenon imposes itself. Consequently, the color and texture of the building materials, the climbing vines, and the numerous dark alcoves and recesses in the facade create an ambience and an aesthetic declaration independent of the architectural statement made by the structure as a whole. In general, views vary greatly depending on the perspective of the observer. As the viewer moves closer to the site, the Coliseum becomes a more visually dominant feature. At greater distances from the site, particularly on the east, the Coliseum recedes from visual prominence, primarily due to the presence of intervening landscaping, foliage, and other facilities within Exposition Park. Views from directional perspectives surrounding the site offer varying degrees of visibility to the Coliseum itself and are described below. A photo location map, Figure V.A.1-1, illustrates where each photo view was taken, and in which direction.

- **Views from North to South:** The view toward the site from the north is predominately a foreground perspective from locations within Exposition Park. From the location of View 1, in Figure V.A.1-2, generally proximal to the southern entrance to the Museum of Natural History, views consist of the north facade of the stadium, with the pierced walls, alcoves, and recesses in the facade plainly visible. Some foliage, including trees and grass, is visible in the foreground and partially blocks the continuity of the view toward the main structure. The view of the stadium from the north can be partially obstructed by outbuildings, such as ticket booths, concession stands, and restrooms on the site. No ground level views of the Coliseum are available from Exposition Boulevard or the USC campus due to the intervening presence of the Museum of Natural History and the California Science Center. Figure V.A.1-2, View 2 provides a closer view of the Coliseum's exterior, as seen from the northeast side of the structure, facing west. Figure V.A.1-2, View 3 presents a view of the Project Site from the steps of the California Science Center, located northeast of the Project Site, looking southwest. The edge of the Coliseum's rim as it curves to the south is visible, as well as outbuildings, access tunnels, and surrounding foliage.
- **Views from South to North:** Public views of the site from the south are afforded by Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and the Hoover Street/South Coliseum Drive corridor. Viewpoints along South Coliseum Drive within Exposition Park, between the Sports Arena on the east and

the EPICC/Swim Stadium on the west provide a picture of the Coliseum in the foreground which encapsulates the idea of the whole structure, though the perspective is somewhat cramped due to the proximity of the roadway to the Project Site. This view is also intermittent because of the presence of outbuildings around the perimeter of the stadium on the site. The view of the Project Site from along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard near the Hoover Street intersection is foreground in perspective and intermittent, obstructed on the east by the Sports Arena and on the west by the EPICC/Swim Stadium complex. Various outbuildings also tend to obscure the view. At times, the whole south facade of the Coliseum is visible from Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, while at other points, the press box and light masts along the south rim are the only distinguishing features visible. The greatest variety of views of the Coliseum from the south are available from Hoover Street, as the street extends the viewshed three miles south to Florence Avenue. Approaching the Project Site on Hoover Street, the viewer is presented with a direct view of the Coliseum's south facade in the background, middleground, and foreground, depending upon distance south of the site. As Hoover Street is aligned in a straight north-south line, which is forced to curve around the Coliseum's east end (South Coliseum Drive), it affords a constant view of the edifice from the southerly approach. A section of the structure is prominent in the middleground from Vernon Avenue north, until the site merges into the foreground near 40<sup>th</sup> Place. Figure V.A.1-3, View 4 provides a view of the Coliseum as seen from 40<sup>th</sup> Place and Hoover Street. The structure is visible, but almost entirely obscured by foliage on either side. From Florence Avenue, the stadium is barely visible in the background and no distinguishing features can be seen. From this distance, the stadium would be identifiable only to a viewer who was familiar with the area. The stadium emerges in its distinguishing shape near Gage Avenue, and becomes relatively identifiable at Slauson Avenue. Thereafter, proceeding north, the Project Site becomes more and more a prominent feature in the background until the background merges with the middleground. Figure V.A.1-3, View 5 provides a view of the Coliseum from the northeast corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Hoover Street. The western edge of the Coliseum is visible as it curves around, but much of the structure is obscured from view by trees and outbuildings.

- Views from East to West: Figure V.A.1-4, View 6 presents the site as viewed from Figueroa Street, at the eastern edge of Exposition Park. The area behind the location of this photograph, on the east side of Figueroa Street, is currently developed with strip commercial retail businesses, and backed by the Harbor Freeway. In the foreground of the photo is the construction of a new parking structure at the California Science Center. Beyond the construction and the foliage, a portion of Christmas Tree Lane, the Coliseum's Peristyle and Olympic torch are visible. Without construction, Christmas Tree Lane obscures much of the otherwise direct view from this location to the Coliseum structure. Intermittent views of the Peristyle and Olympic torch may be obtained from this location, with the scoreboard and videoboard attachments to the Peristyle also partially visible through the trees. From closer to the stadium, inside Exposition Park, several of the concession stands, restroom facilities, and ticket booths lining the yard level along the north edge

**Figure V.A.1-1**

**Figure V.A.1-2**

**Figure V.A.1-3**

**Figure V.A.1-4**

of the site are visible. Views through the Peristyle arches into the inner seating bowl of the Coliseum can also be obtained from the front of the Coliseum, as shown in Figure V.A.1-4, Views 7 and 8, but trees effectively shield this level of detail from street views. In general, the character of the view from this perspective is of landscaped, tree-planted public park grounds, with only intermittent vistas of the Coliseum and/or other structures on the site obtainable from this vicinity. Middleground and background vistas from this vicinity are largely non-existent, shielded by both vegetation and the mass of the Coliseum structure. No residential areas currently have uninterrupted visual access to the site from the east.

- Views from West to East: Figure IV.A.1-5, View 9 presents the site as viewed from the southwest at the intersection of Vermont Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. From this perspective, the southwest end of the Coliseum is partially visible beyond the surface parking lots and park facilities along the west side of Menlo Avenue. The southern exterior of the Coliseum is shielded from view by the imposing mass of the Swim Stadium in the foreground. No views of the interior of the stadium, or of any portion of the Peristyle, are available from this vicinity. Several of the restroom facilities and concession stands, as well as the police substation/storage building and concession storage/offices building which are located on the site are visible at the west end yard level from the west. Development behind the location of this photograph, generally proximal to the southwest corner of the intersection, consists of strip commercial retail businesses, gas stations, and, on the northwest corner of the intersection, a mini-mall. Middleground and background vistas from this location largely consist of the view to the east along the Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard corridor to the Harbor Freeway. These views are characterized by a mix of commercial and multi-family residential uses, as well as of facilities in Exposition Park. No other residential areas currently have uninterrupted visual access to the site from the southwest.

Figure V.A.1-5, View 10 presents the site as viewed from the west along Vermont Avenue, generally opposite its intersection with 39<sup>th</sup> Place. From this perspective the site is directly visible in the foreground, being separated from the viewpoint only by existing surface parking between Vermont and Menlo Avenues. The west end of the Coliseum dominates the vista into the Park from this area. Because of the oval shape of the stadium, its western facade appears to have less breadth and mass than the northern and southern facades. Moving toward the stadium from the location of View 10, the view from Vermont Avenue and Menlo Avenue is mostly unobstructed from north of the Swim Stadium to 39<sup>th</sup> Street, although some foliage and Coliseum outbuildings occasionally obscure the lower parts of the Coliseum. In terms of the overall visibility of the Coliseum, the Menlo Avenue perspective adjacent to the stadium suffers somewhat from being too close to the structure. Development behind the location of Figure V.A.1-5, View 10 is generally comprised of strip commercial businesses along the west side of Vermont Avenue, behind which is a mixed single-family and multi-family residential neighborhood. Middleground and background vistas from this vicinity are largely non-existent, shielded by both vegetation and

**Figure V.A.1-5**

the mass of the Coliseum structure in the foreground. Some views of the museum complexes in the northern portion of the Park are visible, though they are partially obscured by foliage within the Park. Aside from the first few residences west of Vermont Avenue along Leighton Avenue and 39<sup>th</sup> Place, from which the site is partially visible along the view corridors afforded by each street, no other residential areas currently have uninterrupted visual access to the site from the west. The view of the site as viewed from the northwest, at the intersection of Vermont Avenue and 39<sup>th</sup> Street is similar to the one presented in Figure V.A.1-5, View 10.

The Coliseum occupies the center and right foreground, with both the west end and northern facade of the stadium clearly visible, as are the various outbuildings in these locations. The remainder of the view consists of vegetation and landscaping in Exposition Park between the museum complexes, of which portions are visible through the trees, and the Coliseum. No portion of the Peristyle is visible from this vicinity, nor are views available of the interior of the stadium. Development behind the corner of Vermont Avenue and 39<sup>th</sup> Street consists of strip commercial businesses along the west side of Vermont Avenue, behind which is located a mixed single-family and multi-family residential neighborhood. Middleground and background vistas from this vicinity consist generally of views down the tree- and grass-lined corridor between the Coliseum and the museum complexes within the Park toward Figueroa Street to the east. These properties currently have direct views of the Coliseum to the southeast, as well as of the Museum of Natural History to the east. Aside from the first few residences west of Vermont Avenue along 39<sup>th</sup> Street, from which the site is partially visible along the street's view corridor, no other residential areas currently have uninterrupted visual access to the site from the northwest. Figure V.A.1-5, View 11 provides a close-up view of the south side of the Coliseum, looking west from Menlo Avenue, just north of the Los Angeles Swim Stadium.

**Internal Views.** As the Coliseum is a multi-purpose public assembly facility by function, the internal layout of the stadium also lends itself to viewshed characterization. Views of the interior of the stadium are generally confined to locations within the seating bowl of the Coliseum, the press box, and the two office facilities on each side of the Peristyle. Photographs from three perspectives within the interior of the existing Coliseum are presented in Figure V.A.1-6. These perspectives are described as follows:

- View 12 presents a view of the Coliseum's interior from the top of the seating area on the southeast side of the stadium, facing northwest. From this perspective, the Coliseum's northerly and westerly rim is visible, as are the lighting fixtures along the rim. This view along the length of the field encompasses virtually the entire bowl, with the exception of the bench seating immediately below the Peristyle platform near this vantage point. The Tunnel 30 entrance is also clearly visible from this vantage point (at the southwest corner of the stadium at field level).
- View 13 presents a view of the Coliseum's interior from the southwest side of the seating bowl. From this location, the view northeast includes the interior side of the Peristyle, with its attached

**Figure V.A.1-6**

matrix and scoreboard, the interior side of the Coliseum Commission offices, and the opposite portion of the seating bowl, including the bench style seating just below the Peristyle.

- View 14 presents a view of the interior of the Coliseum's Peristyle from the southeast end of the seating bowl. From this location, the Peristyle, Olympic torch, and eastside seating are the dominant visual features. The theater-style seating that constitutes most of the stadium is visible in the immediate foreground, and the bench seating below the Peristyle is visible beyond. Evidence of some foliage on the outside of the stadium is visible, as palm trees can be seen beyond the stadium walls, at the northeast corner of the Coliseum.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

### **Thresholds of Significance**

The California State CEQA Guidelines requires the assessment of aesthetic impacts to consider whether a project would result in (a) a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, (b) substantial damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway, or (c) substantial degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. However, since no empirical criteria exist with which to assess visual impact, the assessment of visual impact is, by nature, a subjective undertaking.

As directed by the City of Los Angeles' Draft L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide, the determination of significance shall be made on a case-by-case basis, considering the following factors:

- The amount or relative proportion of existing features or elements that substantially contribute to the valued visual character or image of a neighborhood, community, or localized area, which would be removed, altered, or demolished;
- The amount of natural open space to be graded or developed;
- The degree to which proposed structures in natural open space areas would be effectively integrated into the aesthetics of the site, through appropriate design, etc.;
- The degree of contrast between proposed features and existing features that represent the area's valued aesthetic image;
- The degree to which a proposed zone change would result in buildings that would detract from the existing style or image of the area due to density, height, bulk, setbacks, signage, or other physical elements;

- The degree to which the Proposed Project would contribute to the area's aesthetic value;
- The Proposed Project's consistency with applicable design guidelines and/or regulations.

## **Project Impacts**

### ***Architectural Features***

The Proposed Project would reconfigure the Coliseum's seating area into three separate levels. In addition, temporary expansion seating areas would be provided adjacent to the east and west end zones of the renovated plaza areas for use during certain events when larger attendance levels are anticipated. The Proposed Project would include a new lower bowl seating level situated closer to the playing field, a luxury suite and lounge level beneath the plaza, and an expanded plaza area fronting the Peristyle (See Figure III-13). The seating rows themselves would consist of floor and riser-mounted armchair seats with the first row situated approximately 5½ feet above the field. The new sideline seating would have the same approximate proximity to the field while the end zone seating would be up to 100 feet closer to the field. Upon the completion of all renovation activities presented as part of the Proposed Project, the Coliseum field would be sized to accommodate American football games or soccer matches.

*Exterior Treatment.* The existing exterior wall of the Coliseum would remain virtually intact, with few alterations, and existing extraneous out-buildings (ancillary structures on-site, but separate from the stadium) would be removed from both the outside of the Coliseum structure and from the adjacent grounds on the site. These ancillary buildings include mechanical and electrical equipment and sheds, restrooms, concession stands, storage buildings, and ticket booths, as well as buildings, escalators, elevators, and non-original stairways which have been added over time. One original (1932) ticket booth located outside the Coliseum in the northeast corner of the site would be retained and two new buildings would be constructed. These buildings include an approximate 20,000 square foot sports and Coliseum athletic history museum and an approximate 20,000 square foot ancillary retail use. Both buildings would be ancillary to the Coliseum, but operational on a day-to-day basis throughout the year. The structures are proposed to be located near the southeast corner of the Coliseum, between the Coliseum and the Sports Arena and/or on the south side of the Coliseum. The Peristyle end of the Coliseum would remain intact as it currently exists, along with the adjacent Coliseum Commission and ticket offices.

The existing openings in the exterior wall of the Coliseum would remain intact and cleared of any miscellaneous piping and wiring. The concrete brackets and upper seating tiers that provide the cornice to the existing wall would also remain. The original exterior lighting fixtures would be reused or recreated where feasible. The existing press box would be completely removed. The new press facilities would be integrated into the Upper Suite Level. The existing earth berm against the exterior wall would remain intact, except for ground-level modifications required to accommodate the new entrances, as described above.

*Interior Treatment.* The interior of the renovated Coliseum would continue to feature the Peristyle as the dominant architectural element in the east end of the bowl. The existing matrix and scoreboards and sound cluster would be removed from the Peristyle. The new seating construction would be consistent with the existing bowl effect, beginning and ending at the Peristyle. The new lower bowl profile would match the existing seating profile at the north and south sidelines. The new club seating decks on the north and south sides of the field are separated from the Lower Bowl by two levels of suites. An additional level of suites and the press box separate the Club Level from the Upper Deck. Several of the existing upper seating rows which currently extend out over the top of the existing exterior wall of the Coliseum would be retained, even though views to the field from these abandoned seating areas on the north and south sideline would be entirely blocked by the new stadium construction. The Upper Concourse Level would occupy the intervening space between the old rim and the new upper deck.

*Landscaping.* While the proposed landscaping plan is still in the conceptual design phase, it is anticipated that much of the existing landscaping on the Project Site would remain following development of the Proposed Project. Portions of the existing landscaped areas to remain would be supplemented by additional landscaping. The proposed landscape plan around the exterior walls of the renovated Coliseum would involve improvements to the following areas: 1) the berm against the exterior wall; 2) the “yard” level plaza; and 3) the area outside of the Peristyle up to the curb of Coliseum Drive. Following is a discussion of each of these elements:

- The plantings on the berm are thought to have originally consisted of Deodar Cedar, Spanish Broom, Acacia, Arizona Cypress, and Eucalyptus trees, with Cotoneaster hedges around the archways of the Peristyle. Numerous non-original plantings have been added on the berm, including a variety of palm trees, with no apparent regularity. It is envisioned that non-original plantings would be removed from the berm and that they would be replanted and reshaped to achieve the regular pattern of the original design.
- The yard level plaza area would consist of a paved area approximately 50 feet wide adjacent to the berm. The continuous paved area would be of either concrete or asphaltic cement. A double row of palm trees set in tree grates is planned down the center of the paved area. These palm trees would align with the exterior wall’s pilasters and would provide a colonnade affect, continuing around the stadium yard. It is anticipated that this colonnade of trees would stop short of the Peristyle. These trees would aid in the characterization of the plaza by: 1) reorganizing the yard with a formal order; 2) providing a vertical counterpoint to the horizontal nature of the existing Coliseum exterior wall; and 3) establishing a distant view of the Coliseum with the tree tops of the palms.

### ***Impact on the Visual Character of the Site and Locale***

*Coliseum Interior.* The planned interior modifications to the Coliseum structure would, as discussed previously, leave the Peristyle intact, thus assuring that it would continue to remain as the dominant

architectural element on the renovated Coliseum. Part of the current effect of the Peristyle is a result of its relationship to the simplicity of the oval it counters. The proposed alterations to the seating bowl of the stadium would modify this simplicity with the consequence that the Peristyle could present less of a contrast in visual simplicity to the remainder of the stadium than under existing conditions. However, the Peristyle would continue to offer a striking contrast in architectural style with the modern improvements, a contrast that could be heightened in effect following the development of the Proposed Project.

The primary alteration to the existing visual character within the stadium would be the separation of the currently continuous seating bowl into different levels on the north and south sidelines. The construction of the Club Seating Level (on the north and south sides only), three suite levels, and Upper Seating Deck would alter the stadium's inner design. Even so, the basic geometry of the bowl would be retained through the retention of the upper bowl ring (above the concourse level) and a large section of seating in the west end zone and by the actual fabric of the Peristyle being retained in the east end. The character of the existing stadium's symmetry would be retained, if not its actual construct. However, the existence of the suite levels and cantilevered upper deck could noticeably alter the existing visual character of the seating sections. The existing rim of the stadium, to be retained outside of the new upper deck, would not be visible from most seating areas within the renovated stadium. The existing upper seating bowl would only remain visible in the west end and on the east end on the north and south sides flanking the Peristyle.

Other features contributing to the general appearance of the Proposed Project would include the scoreboard and matrix, and sound clusters, all of which would be removed from the top of the Peristyle. In addition, the travertine veneer, which was added to the Peristyle in the 1960s, would be retained. The new press box facility would be integrated into the Upper Suite Level and would no longer appear as an obvious structural addition towering over the Coliseum's rim. As a result, it would be expected to provide an improved visual effect as compared to the existing press box. The new field lighting fixtures would be affixed to the underside of the roof canopy. The new lighting system would improve upon the existing pole mounted lights by including improved directional lighting and glare control. The lighting fixtures would have a narrow beam distribution and would be mounted high enough to eliminate shallow aiming angles that can cause light to "spill" out of the stadium. Locating the lights within the roof structure would shield spill over lighting from the neighboring areas and reduce, if not eliminate most glare problems.

Finally, two rings of vomitory entrances would encircle the field on the north and south sides. These tunnel entrances, one on the club seating level and the other on the upper seating deck, would have a similar effect to the existing tunnel openings, interrupting the curve of each seating deck. As with the existing openings, they are necessary features that could be viewed as architecturally enhancing. The addition of new elements segregating the Coliseum's seating into separate levels, however, would constitute a more prominent interruption of the stadium's symmetrical seating bowl.

*Coliseum Exterior.* The planned exterior modifications would leave the existing exterior wall and the Peristyle intact, with few alterations. The removal of the concession storage/police substation building at the existing stadium's west end would have the effect of exposing that portion of the original Coliseum facade now obscured by the building. The concrete brackets and upper seating tiers that form the existing cornices would remain visible. Existing escalators, elevators and most non-original stairways would be removed. New escalators would be placed within the concourse, rather than exposed on the exterior of the façade as the existing escalators are. This escalator positioning would reduce existing visual obscurity of the exterior stadium wall and create a more harmonious, less cluttered effect on the exterior, as would the proposed removal of ancillary outbuildings on the site. These exterior modifications would result in net beneficial aesthetic impacts, as they would improve sight-lines of the Coliseum's exterior walls from the surrounding areas within Exposition Park.

As with existing conditions, the Coliseum itself would continue to be the most visually prominent feature on the site, continuing its existing visual relationship to the adjacent facilities within Exposition Park. Current ground-level views from the surrounding off-site portions of Exposition Park would remain substantially similar to existing views obtainable from these areas, with the notable exception that the exterior yard level of the Coliseum would appear more open due to the removal of many of the ancillary structures currently situated there. The new upper seating deck of the Coliseum, rising to a height of approximately 130 feet above the exterior yard level (approximately 65 feet above the existing rim), and would be visible from ground-level areas surrounding the base of the exterior stadium wall. At the center of the Coliseum, the outer edge of the new upper seating bowl is approximately in alignment with the exterior wall of the Coliseum. At this point the canopy roof overhangs the exterior wall by approximately 22 feet. Moving east and west from the center of the building, the new construction curves inward, away from the Coliseum exterior wall. This would create the perception to approaching spectators of an altered Coliseum design with modern features contrasting with the Coliseum's historic facade. This feature is anticipated to be the most substantial alteration to existing exterior views from ground-level areas to result from implementation of the Proposed Project, providing an obvious distinction of the modern renovation within the historic structure. It is anticipated that the new architectural improvements will highlight the retention of the original historic façade.

Development of the Proposed Project would not be expected to increase or decrease the visibility of the site relative to the surrounding area. The construction of the new upper deck and tensile fabric roof canopy would slightly alter the perception of the Coliseum structure itself from distances around the site, but would not detract from the visual character of the stadium facade. Some views of the Coliseum interior could be obtained through the Peristyle arches from areas in reasonably close proximity to the stadium's east end, although little detail would be distinguishable from these locations. Aside from the new upper deck and roof construct, the primary visual alteration to the site visible from surrounding areas would be the removal of the concession stands, restrooms, and other associated facilities currently haphazardly lining the yard level of the site. These alterations would not constitute an adverse visual

impact, as the removal of these structures would provide viewers with more uninterrupted views of the Coliseum facade.

### ***Alterations to Viewsheds***

*Views Of the Site.* Street level locations from which the Proposed Project would be visually distinctive would be limited to the streets immediately surrounding the site on the west, north, and south. Even so, few specific aspects of the Proposed Project would be visible, and none dominantly visible, from locations surrounding the exterior of the Coliseum. Views from other residential and commercial streets in the outlying vicinity would not be adversely affected since the Proposed Project would be seen only intermittently and would not substantially alter the existing character of the Coliseum. Similarly, the new construction would not obstruct any existing views either onto the site or over the site to areas beyond from any properties in the general vicinity. Views of the Coliseum from directional perspectives surrounding the site would be impacted as follows:

- Views from North to South: The removal of the ancillary buildings around the base of the Coliseum's exterior would allow greater visual access to ground-level elements of the exterior wall (refer to Figure V.A.1-2 Views 1 and 3 for existing views of the Coliseum with ancillary buildings and surrounding gate visible). The added sports and Coliseum athletic history museum and ancillary retail structure would not be visible from the north side of the Project Site. From the north part of Exposition Park, the renovated stadium would be visible. Both the existing stadium rim, which stands approximately 65 feet above ground level, as well as the new upper deck and tensile roof canopy, which would rise approximately 130 feet above ground level, would be visible from the north side of the stadium. The removal of outbuildings and the gate surrounding the Coliseum would enhance views from the north toward the Project Site. The addition of upper deck seating and the roof structure would add modern architectural aspects to the historic structure. As the Proposed Project would retain the historic façade of the Coliseum, visual impacts from these vantage points would be less than significant.
- Views from South to North: This view would be modified slightly, with the rise of the new upper seating deck over the Coliseum's rim being most prominent from Hoover Street, south of the Coliseum. This is the only location surrounding the Coliseum where the angle of sight allows it to be viewed at distances greater than approximately 600 feet (see Figure V.A.1-3, Views 4 and 5 for existing views). With increasing distance from the site to the south along Hoover Street, the visual impact of this upper deck extension becomes less imposing. The removal of the press box and exterior elevator to the press box would eliminate an interruption of a continuous view of the southern facade of the stadium. The ancillary structures currently visible would be removed, and the two new ancillary structures would be visible. The tensile fabric roof canopy structure would be visible from the south, as it would sit above the rim and upper deck of the stadium. From a southerly vantage point, views would consist of the ground level of the existing stadium, up to the

existing rim, along with the added upper deck and roof structure. These visual impacts are not considered significant, as the historical structure would remain intact and more visible than under current conditions. The renovated structure would not affect viewsheds beyond or above the stadium due to an increase in stadium height, as no views beyond or above the existing Coliseum are currently visible.

- **Views from East to West:** While views of the Project Site from Figueroa Street are obscured by Christmas Tree Lane, some characteristics of the Coliseum are visible from certain angles, including the Olympic torch and the existing matrix scoreboards (refer to Figure V.A.1-4, Views 6, 7, and 8). These views would be modified by the removal of the scoreboards and sound clusters that currently sit on top of the Peristyle. Since the matrix and scoreboards were added elements to the Peristyle and were not a part of its original construct, historic preservationists would perceive this modification as an improvement. This change would be visible to viewsheds of the Coliseum's entrance that already exist. The gate currently surrounding the Coliseum would be removed, and the exterior wall of the stadium would become accessible to visitors who are not entering the stadium. The sports and Coliseum athletic history museum and ancillary retail use would not be visible from Figueroa, but would likely be visible from the Peristyle area. From this vantage point, however, views of the Coliseum would not be affected by the ancillary structures. Also visible from some vantage points on the east would be the upper seating deck and roof structure rising up from the north and south sides of the Coliseum's interior. These alterations would be visible from easterly vantage points but would not be considered significant, as the renovation would retain the Peristyle entrance as a dominant architectural feature.
- **Views from West to East:** The view of the Coliseum from the west facing east would be perceptively modified. As seen in Figure V.A.1-5, Views 9 and 10, the existing rim of the Coliseum is visible from westerly vantage points. The Coliseum's exterior wall and rim would remain intact while the existing outbuildings and gate around the Coliseum's exterior would be removed. From this vantage point the new ancillary structures may be visible to the south of the Coliseum and toward the southeast end. In addition, the elevators that are now visible from the exterior will be relocated inside, thus exposing more of the original facade. The Proposed Project would not adversely affect the exterior view of the existing Coliseum structure, but would improve the view at ground level. Above and beyond the existing rim, the tensile fabric roof canopy and new upper deck seating would be visible on the north and south sides of the stadium. The alterations to the west-to-east views are not considered adverse, as views of the new architectural additions would not obstruct views of the Coliseum's existing facade, which would continue to be prominent in the foreground.

## **Impact Summary**

The Proposed Project would renovate the interior of the Coliseum, altering its existing interior appearance. The separation of the stadium's seating into three main sections, with two suite levels positioned in between the lower bowl level and the club level, and one suite level positioned between the club level and the upper concourse level, would effectively change the perception of the existing stadium as a homogeneous symmetrical, elliptical bowl. The addition of a new upper seating deck above the new suite levels and horizontally positioned closer to the field would create the general visual effect of a smaller, less expansive stadium. The overall alteration of the interior of the Coliseum would be considered to be a significant visual change. From an aesthetic point of view, this change could be considered to be either adverse or beneficial, depending upon the perception of the viewer. The interior modifications proposed as part of the Proposed Project would not be anticipated to be clearly visible from any location surrounding the exterior of the stadium, and would therefore not be expected to produce an adverse visual impact on views toward the site.

One of the main objectives of the Proposed Project are to renovate the Coliseum in conformance with the generally accepted standards of design for NFL stadiums, thus enabling the Coliseum Commission to acquire and maintain an NFL franchise in the City of Los Angeles. In obtaining this goal, the proposed architectural design is oriented around improving sight-lines and bringing the seats closer to the field level for optimum views of the playing field. In this regard the appearance of the stadium structure is diminished by improved sight-lines to the playing field. In keeping the exterior facade intact and retaining as much of the original seating fabric as possible, the existing portions of the seating areas would remain visible behind the new seating areas from the main concourse and club level areas. As a result, the Coliseum would retain its historic image and feel within a modern state-of-the art sports venue.

## **CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

Development of the Proposed Project, in conjunction with the related projects, would cumulatively contribute to visual character and viewshed impacts in and around the Exposition Park area. The renovation and expansion of the EPICC complex and Los Angeles Swim Stadium, the California Science Center, the Science Museum School and Education Resource Center, planned renovation and expansion of the Natural History Museum, and the development of the LAUSD Armory School site are all related projects in Exposition Park. The Proposed Project and the related projects, are in accordance with the objectives stated in the Exposition Park Master Plan. The objectives of the Plan include enhancing the Park's character, preserving the historical legacy of the Park and generally encouraging recreational uses in the Park.<sup>2</sup> The Proposed Project and the related projects located

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<sup>2</sup> *California Museum of Science and Industry, Exposition Park Master Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, May 1993.*

within Exposition Park aim to encourage passive and active use of the Park by renovating existing uses but restoring the historic character present.

### **MITIGATION MEASURES**

Development of the Proposed Project would not result in a significant aesthetic impact to any view, view corridor, or visual resource. Therefore, no mitigation measures are required.