
IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

B. AESTHETICS

INTRODUCTION

This section addresses the subject of aesthetics with respect to the proposed project and includes a description of existing visual conditions and an evaluation of potential aesthetic effects associated with implementing the proposed project. Computer-generated visual simulations illustrating "before" and conceptual "after" visual conditions at the project site as seen from two representative, public vantage points are presented as part of the analysis. Digitized photographs and computer modeling and rendering techniques were used to prepare the simulation images.

The visual character of a project site is typically evaluated with respect to its physical components and within the context of its neighborhood through an analysis of its compatibility with the land uses of the immediately surrounding areas. The inherent subjectivity of issues and values relative to visual character often makes it difficult to form a conclusive determination of what constitutes a "significant impact" under CEQA.

Visual impacts are also analyzed through an examination of views and/or viewsheds. Viewsheds refer to the visual qualities of a geographical area that are defined by the horizon, topography, and other natural features that give an area its visual boundary and context, or by development that has become a prominent visual component of the area. Public views are those which can be seen from vantage points that are publicly accessible, such as streets, freeways, parks, and vista points. These views are generally available to a greater number of persons than are private views. Private views are those which can be seen from vantage points located on private property. Private views are not considered to be impacted when interrupted by land uses on adjacent blocks, particularly if the project complies with the zoning and design guidelines applicable to the site. Viewshed impacts are typically characterized by the loss and/or obstruction of existing scenic vistas or other major views in the area of the site which are available to the general public.

Light and glare impacts are analyzed by considering the qualitative aesthetic characteristics of the existing nighttime lighting and daytime glare environments on the site and the modifications the proposed project would make to those environments.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Regional Visual Character

The general topography of the San Mateo County area is characterized by sub-parallel, northwest trending mountain ranges and intervening valleys. The relatively flat-lying, alluviated San Francisco Bay plain is situated to the east, and the uplifted Santa Cruz Mountains are located to the west. Seventy-four percent of County land, primarily in the area west of Interstate (I-280), is in agricultural, watershed, open space, wetlands or parks use. Mild climate, abundant natural resources, rolling green foothills, stands of old redwoods, and creeks characterize western San Mateo County, providing many areas with high visual quality.

Western San Mateo County is primarily accessed by State Route-1 (Highway 1), which follows the Pacific coast from Leggett in Mendocino County (where it joins US Highway 101) to Dana Point in Los Angeles County (where it joins Interstate I-5). Along the San Mateo County coastline, Highway 1 (Cabrillo Highway) is a well-known, highly recognized county designated scenic road. The region surrounding the project site is characterized by rolling hills descending from the ridges of the Coastal Range to the east, and the cliffs and sandy beaches on the Pacific Ocean to the west. A combination of valleys and open hillsides running to the ocean dominate the area's geography.

Local Visual Character

As described in Section III (Project Description), the project site is located near the San Pedro Valley County Park at the intersection of the North and Middle Fork of San Pedro Creek. The site is located immediately to the south of the Park Mall Shopping Center and north of Toledo Court. Historically, the site was used as a farm and then converted into a commercial nursery, and several outbuildings including a warehouse, carport, barn, and a dilapidated greenhouse remain on-site. An existing single family home is located (off-site) between the eastern side of the property and Oddstad Boulevard. A portion of the eastern property line (front property line) faces Oddstad Boulevard and is the only access point to the site. The area in which the project site is located is characterized by agricultural uses, single-family homes, senior housing, commercial uses, institutional uses, and open space.

The visual character of the site can generally be described as vacant with the exception of remnant dilapidated structures. The primary character defining features on the project site are its existing vegetation, remnants of the previous commercial nursery, and the debris and garden waste present on the project site. Vegetation on the site is mostly a ruderal field and native and non-native riparian vegetation along San Pedro Creek.

Views of the Project Site

The following discussion is based on an assessment of site visibility conducted by WRA and Environmental Vision. The photos presented in this discussion include views from vantage points in areas surrounding the project site in which the site is visible, as well as views of other surrounding land uses. In no way are the photos meant as an exhaustive collection of all the views that include the project site from all vantage points, but is meant to show representative views toward the site from the surrounding areas.

As shown in Figures IV.B-1 through IV.B-3, views of the project site are available from a variety of surrounding locations, including short-range views from adjacent roadways and land uses, medium-range views from land uses located further away from the site, and long-range views from distant ridgelines and hillsides. However, several natural and built features in the project vicinity partially or completely screen the project site from many off-site roadways and land uses. These features include a tall, dense stand of eucalyptus trees located behind the project site next to the North Fork of San Pedro Creek, riparian vegetation and single-family homes along the Middle Fork of San Pedro Creek, the existing single-family home located in front of the project site at Oddstad Boulevard, and the Park Mall Shopping Center which is situated approximately 12 feet higher than the existing on-site grade.

In the immediate project site vicinity, short-range views of the site are available from Oddstad Boulevard, portions of the Park Mall Shopping Center parking lot, the single-family residence located in front of the project site, and the Wheeler Ranch Trailhead and the Senior Housing apartment complex to the east across Oddstad Boulevard. Views of the site from Toledo Court are very limited due to the existing single-family homes located along the north side of Toledo Court and the riparian vegetation along the Middle Fork of San Pedro Creek.

Medium-range views of the project site are generally limited to views from some nearby single-family homes situated along Park Pacifica Avenue and Alicante Drive, as well as from San Pedro Valley County Park. However, medium-range views of the site from other nearby roadways such as Park Pacifica Avenue, Linda Mar Boulevard, Terra Nova Boulevard, and Alicante Drive are considerably obstructed by existing homes and buildings, trees and landscaping along these roadways.

Long-range views of the project site are generally limited to locations situated at higher elevations than the project site that do not have intervening obstructions (i.e., homes, buildings, shopping center, trees and landscaping) between these locations and the project site. Such unobstructed and partially obstructed long-range views of the project site are available from San Pedro Valley County Park's Mountain Trail to the southwest (as well as other locations within San Pedro Valley County Park), and several hillside residential developments located north of Terra Nova Boulevard. Refer to Figure IV.B-4 and Figures III-4 through III-7 for additional photos of the project site and surrounding land uses.



View 1: View to the north of the project site, and adjacent single family residence. Park Mall Shopping Center is in the background. Photo taken from Wheeler Ranch Trailhead at Oddstad Boulevard.

View 2: View to the west of the entire project site from San Pedro Valley County Park. Park Mall Shopping Center is located to the north (right) and residences on Toledo Court are located to the south (left). The adjacent Park Mall Shopping Center is approximately 12 feet higher than the existing on-site grade.



View 3: View to the northeast of the project site from San Pedro Valley County Park's Montara Mountain Trail. Residential uses along Toledo Court and Linda Mar Boulevard are visible in the foreground.

Figure IV.B-1. Views of the Project Site

Oddstad Assisted Living Center
City of Pacifica, California



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

Date: 2011
Source: WRA Inc. and Environmental Vision



View 1: View to the north of the project site from Toledo Court.

View 2: View to the northwest of the project site access point, existing structures, utility connections, and adjacent single family residence. Photo taken from Oddstad Boulevard.



View 3: View to the southwest of ridgeline, existing structures of the project site and adjacent Park Mall Shopping Center.

Figure IV.B-2. Views of the Project Site

Oddstad Assisted Living Center
City of Pacifica, California



Date: 2011
Source: WRA Inc. and Environmental Vision



View 1: View to the northwest of on-site warehouse, overhead utility connections and the western boundary of the project site.

View 2: View to the north from the eastern boundary of the project site. Park Mall Shopping Center is located to the north and the adjacent single family residence is located to the east (right).



View 3: View to the west of the project site toward the western boundary and including the dilapidated greenhouse and the Park Mall Shopping Center to the north (right).

Figure IV.B-3. Views of the Project Site and Surrounding Uses

Oddstad Assisted Living Center
City of Pacifica, California



Date: 2011
Source: WRA Inc. and Environmental Vision

Light and Glare

There are currently no sources of light on the project site; however, the existing dilapidated greenhouse is a potential source of glare during sunny conditions. Daytime sources of glare in the vicinity of the site include reflections off of light-colored surfaces, windows, and metal details on cars traveling on Oddstad Boulevard and the adjacent Park Mall Shopping Center. Light sources in the vicinity of the site include streetlights along Oddstad Boulevard, headlights of cars traveling nearby, and outdoor and indoor lighting from the adjacent land uses.

Scenic Vistas

The Open Space and Recreation and Community Design Elements of the City of Pacifica General Plan contain policies aimed in part to preserve the visual character of the City. Although the General Plan does not define the term “scenic vista” the Open Space and Recreation Element draws a connection between open space and the City’s visual resources. The visual resources noted in this element are most importantly the City’s hillsides and ocean. The 1980 City of Pacifica General Plan Community Design Element discusses the importance of protecting the City’s important viewsheds and sometimes “rather delicate terrain of hillside areas” and includes policies to balance these values with the interests of local property owners and residents. The General Plan provides that views of open space are as important as access to open space and viewsheds should be identified and protected.

Scenic Roadways

The Scenic Highway Element of the General Plan describes the Linda Mar Boulevard – Oddstad – Terra Nova Boulevard – Fassler Avenue loop as “providing spectacular views of the coastal ridge and ocean and connecting major recreation areas (San Pedro Valley County Park, Sanchez Adobe, and the Discovery Trail at the end of Fassler Avenue) and points of historic interest and scenic beauty. As such, the General Plan proposes that the Linda Mar Boulevard-Oddstad-Terra Nova Boulevard-Fassler Avenue loop be considered for scenic roadway designation. Currently, Oddstad Boulevard is not designated as a scenic roadway by the City of Pacifica, San Mateo County, or the State.

Ridgelines and Skylines

The General Plan defines ridgelines as: “the tops of hills or hillocks normally viewed against a background of other hills.” Meanwhile, skylines are defined as: “the line where sky and land masses meet.” The views to the southeast from the project site include both ridgelines and skylines. Views to the north, northeast, and south predominately include commercial and residential uses, respectively.

REGULATORY SETTING

Federal and State

Currently no Federal and State policies and/or mandates related to Aesthetics exist.

Local

As previously mentioned, the Open Space and Recreation and Community Design Elements of the City of Pacifica General Plan include several policies considered to be applicable for aesthetics:

Open Space Element

Policy 3: Encourage development plans which protect or provide generous open space appropriately landscaped. Balance open space, development and public safety, particularly in hillside areas.

Action Programs

Short Term 3: Views of open space are as important as access to open space. Viewsheds should be identified and protected.

Community Design Element

Policy 3: Protect the City's irreplaceable scenic and visual amenities.

Scenic Highways Element

As discussed above, Oddstad Boulevard is part of a loop of streets that the General Plan has identified as proposed scenic roadways. The General Plan recommends that a corridor study be conducted, and a program to protect and enhance the scenic qualities from the proposed roadway, and adoption of the roadway with its protection program. The study, program preparation, and adoption of local scenic roadways is exclusively a local responsibility. State and county roadway designations are made by the State and county, but the study and program mentioned above are prepared locally with local initiative.

Design Review

The City of Pacifica has adopted Design Guidelines as one step in a continuing effort to maintain the quality of the City's physical development where desirable attributes exist, and to improve the quality of development where such attributes are lacking. The Guidelines are intended to:

- Ensure at least a minimum standard of design through the application of consistent policies.
- Encourage new construction which exceeds minimum standards and discourage construction which falls short of those standards.

- Provide a framework for review and evaluation of design proposals.
- Implement applicable General Plan and Local Coastal Plan goals and policies.
- Expedite and facilitate the planning permit process.
- Provide direction for design and redesign of projects.

The Design Guidelines include general guidelines that address site planning, building design, landscaping, and water conservation. They also include guidelines that address specific types of development and special problems including substandard lots, infill development and multi-unit development guidelines which are most applicable to the project site. City staff will provide an assessment of the proposed project's consistency with these guidelines as part of the City's standard design review process.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Thresholds of Significance

Based on the CEQA Standards of Significance, the project would generally be considered to have a significant impact on the environment if it would:

- (a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- (b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, or historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- (c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or
- (d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Aesthetics Impacts Not Further Analyzed

All of the four thresholds of significance listed above are analyzed below.

Project Description

As described in detail in Section III, Project Description, the proposed project consists of the construction and long-term operation of an assisted living center complex. The proposed project includes 96 units, 42 of which would be one bedroom units and 54 of which would be studios. The project application materials describe that the proposed project has been designed to suit the site geometry, keep the improvement away from the riparian belt of San Pedro Creek, and maximize open space with underground parking. The proposed project's three three-story buildings would reach a maximum height of approximately 33 feet and were designed in a stepped pattern following the natural grade so that the lobby would be 12 feet lower than the adjacent Park Mall Shopping Center and 5 feet lower than Oddstad Boulevard.

The project design includes the use of mansard-type roofing and earth tone coloring. Building materials would include painted wood trellises with fiber cement casing and molding, bituminous roofing with high solar reflection index (SRI) reflection white coating and light weight cement tiles, high efficiency double panel glazed windows, and an exterior of hardy plank siding with a cultured stone veneer wainscoat.

The riparian zone of the creek encroaches into the site at an average of about 30 feet. The building improvements would be setback at least 30 feet from the riparian belt and an average of 48 feet total. The access road improvements would be set at least 25 feet away from the riparian belt. A small portion would encroach into the 25 foot setback because of space limitations caused by the only access point on the property.

The overall proposed landscaping is shown in Figure III-21. The proposed project would include landscaped garden areas and walkways. These landscaped areas would act as open space and recreation areas for residents. Non-native plants within the project site would be removed from the creek area and replaced with native vegetation. Currently, a formal landscape plan has not been designed for the proposed project.

The lighting plan would include night lighting for parking areas and walkways. Parking lot lights would cast downward and would be shrouded. Walkways and pathways would have low level lighting to help identify the route. The proposed project would include wall mounted lights to help illuminate spaces for possible nighttime use. The project site lighting would be designed to comply with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) light pollution reduction requirements, as well as the Design Review guidelines. Figure III-22 shows the Exterior Lighting Plan.

The proposed project also includes the installation of on-site renewable energy/green power from solar panels on the top of each building. Existing overhead telephone lines and poles would be removed and relocated.

Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

As described previously, computer-generated visual simulations illustrating "before" and conceptual "after" visual conditions at the project site as seen from two representative, public vantage points are presented as part of the analysis. Figure IV.B-5 illustrates the locations of the visual simulation viewpoints. Digitized photographs and computer modeling and rendering techniques were used to prepare the simulation images (Figures IV.B-6 and IV.B-7).

Impact AES-1 Impacts on Scenic Vistas

A significant impact may occur if a project were to introduce incompatible scenic elements within a field of view containing a scenic vista or substantially block views of a scenic vista. Although the General Plan does not define the term “scenic vista,” the Open Space and Recreation Element identifies views of hillsides and the ocean as important visual resources. The General Plan provides that views of open space are as important as access to open space and viewsheds should be identified and protected.

Views from and through the project site do not include views of the Pacific Ocean but do include views of undeveloped hillsides and ridgelines within San Pedro Valley County Park south of the site (Figure IV.B-6). The visual simulation of the proposed project provided in Figure IV.B-6 illustrates that the proposed project would be visible from Oddstad Boulevard near the Park Mall Shopping Center. The proposed project would also be visible from portions of San Pedro Valley County Park’s Mountain Trail to the southwest (as well as other locations within San Pedro Valley County Park), and several hillside residential developments located north of Terra Nova Boulevard (see Figure IV.B-1, View 3). Because the site itself presently offers no scenic value (see Figures IV.B-2 and IV.B-3), development would not have an aesthetic impact on-site. Existing trees near the Middle Fork of San Pedro Creek currently obstruct most of the undeveloped ridgeline and hillside to the south from Oddstad Boulevard. As shown in the visual simulation of the project in Figure IV.B-6, only a very small portion of the undeveloped ridgeline and hillside to the south would be obstructed by the project from this particular viewpoint.

Scenic vistas of undeveloped ridgelines and hillsides through the site from other viewpoints are not available due to the various natural and built features in the project vicinity (e.g. the tall, dense stand of eucalyptus trees located behind the project site next to the North Fork of San Pedro Creek, etc.). Therefore, impacts related to scenic vistas would be **less than significant** and no mitigation measures are required.

Impact AES-2 Impacts on Scenic Resources from a Scenic Highway

As stated above, the proposed project would also result in a significant aesthetics impact if it would substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, or historic buildings within a state scenic highway. There are no scenic highways in the vicinity of the project site from which the site is visible. Therefore, project impacts on scenic resources from a scenic highway would be **less than significant** and no mitigation measures are required.

Impact AES-3 Impacts on Visual Character of the Project Site and Surroundings

A significant impact may occur if a project were to introduce incompatible visual elements on the project site or visual elements that would be incompatible with the character of the area surrounding the project site. The project site is located in an urbanized area characterized by a variety of land uses, including single-family residential homes, multi-family apartment complexes, church, San Pedro Valley County Park, and the Park Mall Shopping Center. The project site is bordered on the south and west by the dense riparian belt of the Middle Fork of

San Pedro Creek and by a steep hillside and a tall, dense stand of eucalyptus trees located near the North Fork of San Pedro Creek. To the north, the grade differential between Park Mall Shopping Center and the site varies between 8 and 14 feet.

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the development of a new assisted living center on the project site which would be generally consistent with the overall mix of land uses in the project area. The massing and height of the proposed project would be similar to nearby multi-family residential uses, as well as the shopping center in the area. While massing and height of the proposed project would not be entirely consistent with the single-family homes in the vicinity of the project site, including the existing homes along Toledo Court, the existing vegetation along the North and Middle Forks of San Pedro Creek and proposed on-site landscaping would help reduce the visibility of the project from off-site locations (see Figure IV.B-6). Although the proposed project would alter the visual character of the area, the alteration would not constitute a substantial degradation. Therefore, project impacts on the visual character of the surrounding area would be **less than significant** and no mitigation measures are required.

Impact AES-4 Light and Glare Impacts

A significant impact would occur if the proposed project resulted in the creation of a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. The project site is located in an urbanized area characterized by a variety of land uses. Daytime sources of glare in the vicinity of the site include reflections off of light-colored surfaces, windows, and metal details on cars traveling on Oddstad Boulevard and the adjacent Park Mall Shopping Center. Light sources in the vicinity of the site include streetlights along Oddstad Boulevard, headlights of cars traveling nearby, and outdoor and indoor lighting from the adjacent land uses. There are no existing light sources on the project site. While the project site is located in an urbanized neighborhood with numerous light sources, undeveloped areas to the east and south of the site, including San Pedro Valley County Park, do not include light sources.

Implementation of the proposed project would introduce new sources of light and glare to the site, including interior and exterior building lighting and vehicle headlights, reflective surfaces (including solar panels), such as windows and light-colored trim. However, the additional light and glare sources would not be substantial enough to significantly impact day or nighttime views in the area. As described in Section III, Project Description, the proposed project's lighting plan would include night lighting for parking areas and walkways. Parking lot lights would cast downward and would be shrouded. Walkways and pathways would have low level lighting to help identify the route. The project site lighting would be designed to comply with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) light pollution reduction requirements, as well as the Design Review guidelines. Figure III-22 shows the Exterior Lighting Plan. Light pollution reduction measures have been designed into the project as well. These features include the use of automatic lights, maximization of interior luminaries, and limiting exterior lighting to 0.10 horizontal and vertical foot-candles (FTC) at the site boundary and no greater than 0.01

horizontal FTC beyond the site boundary. Due to the fact the proposed driveway is close to the edge of the riparian corridor, the applicant would not use lighting along the roadway on the creek side and would plant a “screen” of red and arroyo willows to decrease the potential effects of car lights on the riparian system. In addition, several natural and built features in the project vicinity partially or completely screen the project site from many off-site roadways and land uses. These features include a tall, dense stand of eucalyptus trees located behind the project site next to the North Fork of San Pedro Creek, riparian vegetation and single-family homes along the Middle Fork of San Pedro Creek, the existing single-family home located in front of the project site at Oddstad Boulevard, and the Park Mall Shopping Center which is situated approximately 12 feet higher than the existing on-site grade. Overall, light and glare impacts would be **less than significant** and no mitigation measures are required.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The related projects listed in Section III, Project Description, consist of projects of various land uses, including (but not limited to) single-family residential, multi-family residential, commercial, and retail. As shown in Table III-1, none of the related projects are in immediate proximity to the project site. Project impacts related to scenic vistas or other scenic resources, visual character, and light and glare would be limited to the project site and areas immediately surrounding the site. As the building sites for all related projects are outside of the proposed project vicinity, the aesthetics impacts of the related projects would not contribute to the aesthetic impacts to the project site. Overall, cumulative impacts to aesthetics would be **less than significant** and no mitigation measures are required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

Aesthetics impacts associated with the proposed project would be **less than significant**.

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