

## 4.1 AESTHETICS

This section describes existing conditions related to scenic views, scenic resources, and the visual character of unincorporated county areas; identifies associated regulatory requirements; evaluates potential project and cumulative impacts; and identifies mitigation measures for any significant or potentially significant impacts related to implementation of the Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update of the County of Santa Cruz (County) General Plan and Local Coastal Program (LCP) and County Code (Sustainability Update or project). The analysis is based on review of existing state and local policies and regulations and existing studies regarding scenic views and resources.

### 4.1.1 Environmental Setting

#### 4.1.1.1 Overview of Visual Character of Santa Cruz County

The visual character of Santa Cruz County consists of a number of natural and developed components, including scenic ocean coastlines along the county’s western and southern borders and rugged coastal mountains inland along the county’s northern and eastern boundaries that support extensive forest cover. Lands in agricultural production dominate the visual character in the southern portion of the county. One of the distinct visual features of Santa Cruz County is the extensive forest cover of the Santa Cruz Mountains in the north and northeast, including stands of coast redwoods; the Santa Cruz Mountains are the southern edges of this species’ range in coastal California (AMBAG 2021). The aesthetic character of urban areas in the coastal terraces between the Santa Cruz and Aptos is influenced by coastal vistas and stream valleys running southward from the Santa Cruz Mountains and developed areas. Elevations in Santa Cruz County range from sea level to more than 3,200 feet above sea level at Mt. Bielawski, which is located near the Santa Cruz-Santa Clara county line (AMBAG 2021).

#### 4.1.1.2 Scenic Views and Scenic Resources

According to the proposed General Plan/LCP Agriculture, Natural Resources + Conservation (ARC) Element, the county is highly scenic and supports scenic vistas and diverse scenic resources, from stunning ocean vistas along the entire coastline, open agricultural lands along the northern coasts and in the southern part of the county, redwood forests, and the rolling hillsides and ridgetops of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Scenic resources include redwood forests, coastal cliffs and estuaries, and rural agricultural fields and orchard areas (County of Santa Cruz 2017). Scenic resources also include rivers, streams, watersheds, reservoirs, special geologic formations such as sandhill outcroppings, and selected vegetative communities. Steep slopes and high elevations are identified for their potential to provide scenic vistas. Scenic roads and highways, such as Highways 1, 9, 17, 35, 152, and 236, afford public views of the Monterey Bay, agricultural fields, dense redwood forests, open meadows, and mountain hillsides (County of Santa Cruz 2017).

Open space lands within the county’s state parks contribute both to the county’s forested aesthetic and connection to the Pacific Ocean, including Big Basin Redwoods and Wilder Ranch State Parks and

a series of state beaches along the shoreline in the North Coast area; Henry Cowell Redwoods, Castle Rock, and the Forest of Nisene Marks State Parks in the mountain foothills; and Manresa and Sunset state beaches in South County. Additionally, the Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument provides rich aesthetic value associated with undeveloped coastal terraces connecting to the San Vicente Redwoods in the North Coast area. Such rural lands are considered visual resources within the county (County of Santa Cruz 2017).

The County’s existing General Plan/LCP designates “Coastal Special Scenic Areas” to include a) Bonny Doon sandstone formations, generally found within the borders of Pine Flat Road, Laguna Creek, Ice Cream Grade, and Martin Road; b) the area enclosed by the Swanton Road and Highway 1; and (c) the Swanton Road Coastal Special scenic area north of Last Chance Road toward Highway 1.

### 4.1.1.3 Scenic Roads and Highways

#### State Scenic Highways

The California Scenic Highway Program, managed by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), preserves and protects scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to designated scenic highways. The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of Eligible or Designated scenic highways. Official scenic highway designation requires a local jurisdiction to enact a scenic corridor protection program that protects and enhances scenic resources. Currently, there are no state highways in the county that have been officially designated as State Scenic Highways; however, there are six Eligible State Scenic Highways that have the potential to be officially designated in the future. These include:

- Highway 1 - the Monterey to San Mateo county lines
- Highway 9 - Highway 1 near Santa Cruz to the Santa Clara county line
- Highway 17 - Highway 1 near Santa Cruz to the Santa Clara county line
- Highway 35 - Highway 17 to the Santa Clara county line
- Highway 152 - Highway 1 to the Santa Clara county line at Hecker Pass
- Highway 236 - Highway 9 near Boulder Creek to SR 9 northeast of Big Basin Redwoods State Park (AMBAG 2021).

#### Local Scenic Roads

According to the proposed General Plan/LCP ARC Element, public roads provide the broadest range and greatest level of public access to the various scenic and aesthetic resources within the county, offering important viewing areas and scenic corridors. Scenic roads and highways, such as portions of Highway 1, as well as Highways 9, 17, 35, 152, and 236, and local County roads provide public views of the Monterey Bay, agricultural fields, dense redwood forests, open meadows, and mountain hillsides.

The County's existing General Plan/LCP identifies the following roads and highways that “are valued for their vistas,” which include and generally coincide with state highways identified as potentially eligible for scenic highway status. These roads are summarized below.

#### **State Highways**

- Highway 1 – San Mateo County to Monterey County.
- Highway 9 – Highway 1 to Santa Clara County
- Highway 17 – Highway 1 to Santa Clara County
- Highway 35 – Highway 17 to San Mateo County
- Highway 129 - Highway 1 to San Benito County
- Highway 152 – Highway 1 to Santa Clara County
- Highway 236 – Highway 9 in Boulder Creek to Highway 9 at Waterman Gap

#### **County Roads**

- Amesti Road – Varni Road to Browns Valley Road
- Beach Road – Highway 1 to Palm Beach
- Bonita Drive and San Andreas Road – Highway 1 to Beach Road
- Bonny Doon Road – Highway 1 to Pine Flat Road
- Browns Valley Road – Eureka Canyon Road to Hazel Dell Road
- Buena Vista Drive – San Andreas Road to Larkin Valley Road
- Casserly Road – Mile marker 1.75 to Highway 152
- Corralitos Road – Freedom Boulevard to Browns Valley Road
- Empire Grade – Santa Cruz city limits to the end of Empire Grade
- East Cliff Drive – 33rd Avenue to 41st Avenue
- Eureka Canyon Road – Highland Way to Corralitos
- Graham Hill Road – Lockwood Lane to Highway 9
- Hazel Dell Road – Browns Valley Road to Mt. Madonna Road
- Highland Way – Summit Road to Eureka Canyon Road
- Ice Cream Grade
- Martin Road – Pine Flat to Ice Cream Grade
- Mt. Hermon Road – Scotts Valley city limits to Graham Hill Road
- Mt. Madonna Road – Gaffey Road to Hazel Dell Road
- Pine Flat Road – Bonny Doon Road to Empire Grade
- Sand Dollar Drive
- Smith Grade
- Summit Road – Highway 17 to Highland Way
- Sunset Beach and Shell Road
- Swanton Road – Highway 1 at Davenport Landing to Highway 1 at Greyhound Rock

#### 4.1.1.4 Existing Visual Character of the Unincorporated Area of Santa Cruz County

##### North Coast Area

The coastal area north of the City of Santa Cruz comprises the northwestern portion of the county and includes the unincorporated communities of Bonny Doon and Davenport. The North Coast area provides a mix of rugged coastline, sandy beaches, coastal agricultural terraces, pastoral grasslands, and densely forested uplands and riparian corridors. This area includes agricultural and timberlands and low-density residential development. Public lands include Big Basin Redwoods and Wilder Ranch State Parks, Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument, and other state park beaches along the coast. Coastal terraces in this region provide area for cultivated agriculture and some cattle grazing; pockets of agricultural use also occur in the hillside and mountainous areas, including larger acreage residential lots in the community of Bonny Doon (County of Santa Cruz 2017).

The North Coast affords many scenic vistas of the Pacific Ocean that also provides visually interesting views of natural features, such as rolling hills, wetlands, and unique vegetation communities; these vistas are predominantly available along Highway 1, coastal bluffs, and in areas of higher elevation.

##### Santa Cruz Mountains Area

The northeastern portion of the county consists of Santa Cruz Mountains, extending from the ridgelines west of San Lorenzo Valley to the Santa Clara County line. This area includes small communities in the San Lorenzo Valley with rural residential neighborhoods and timber operations in foothill and mountainous areas. The unincorporated towns include Felton, Ben Lomond, and Boulder Creek, which are small mountain communities along Highway 9. Each of these communities identify unique features that represent the character of these small rustic towns within their adopted town plans. The aesthetic of these towns is characterized as rustic with individualistic architecture that represent the towns' historic roots as western settlements. Public lands in the Mountain Region include Henry Cowell Redwoods, Castle Rock, and the Forest of Nisene Marks State Parks, as well as the Loch Lomond Reservoir (County of Santa Cruz 2017).

Much of the Santa Cruz Mountains range, which comprises deep valleys and forested slopes, provides public views of scenic natural areas along public roads and numerous recreational trails. Natural scenic resources in this region include dense redwood forest, oak woodland and chaparral, and other unique vegetation communities. The headwaters of the San Lorenzo River watershed originate in this region above Boulder Creek; the river and its tributaries flow through Boulder Creek on the east and south through Brookdale, Ben Lomond, and Felton (County of Santa Cruz 2017).

##### Urban Area

The urbanized area of the unincorporated county is generally delineated by the Urban Services Line (USL) in the central portion of the county, extending south and east from the City of Santa Cruz. This area supports urban and suburban areas including the unincorporated communities of Live Oak, Soquel, Aptos, and La Selva Beach, and rural residential, agricultural, and forest lands in the inland hills east of the developed

urban area. Existing urban uses include a mix of residential and commercial facilities, some industrial uses, and institutional uses, including Cabrillo College. Public lands include portions of Henry Cowell Redwoods and the Forest of Nisene Marks State Parks. The aesthetic of the USL is characterized by coastal terraces, coastal vistas, and stream valleys running southward from the Santa Cruz Mountains. Portions of public roads provide scenic ocean vistas and contain both natural features and historic neighborhoods.

The USL is developed with a mix of older, some of which are historic, and newer buildings. Developed communities have retained a distinctive look and feel, with a mix of suburban residential neighborhoods and more intensely developed commercial and industrial areas, primarily along Soquel Drive and Soquel Avenue in Live Oak and Soquel (County of Santa Cruz 2017). Scenic resources in this region can be found along creeks and watershed drainages flowing from the mountains to the region's lagoons and beaches. The Santa Cruz Mountains and its foothills provide a backdrop of open space views (County of Santa Cruz 2017).

## South County

The southern portion of the county extends from the eastern county line to the coast and includes the unincorporated neighborhoods in Corralitos, along Freedom Boulevard, La Selva Beach, Larkin Valley, and Amesti Road. Areas of single-family and lower-density residential development are commonly separated by agricultural lands under cultivation with in-ground crops, orchards, or greenhouses, particularly on low-lying coastal areas. Public lands include Manresa and Sunset State Beaches. Redwood and mixed conifer hardwood forests, oak woodlands, chaparral vegetation, and the topography of the inland foothills make up most natural landscapes in the area, with riparian areas extending to the coast, and multiple large sloughs and wetlands amidst coastal agricultural fields. South County is characterized by agricultural and natural landscapes on the Pajaro Valley floor situated before backdrops of the inland foothills and Santa Cruz Mountains. Visually scenic features include the varying topography of valleys and ridgelines, the Pajaro River and its tributaries traversing east-west across the valley floor, wetlands, grassland meadows, ranches, and rural agricultural landscapes. Agricultural landscapes typically consist of open row crops and greenhouses (County of Santa Cruz 2017).

### 4.1.1.5 Light and Glare

Primary sources of light within the county include building interior and exterior lighting, street lighting, security lighting, landscape lighting, and vehicle lights. New sources of lighting can be a nuisance to sensitive viewers through light spill or can create an ambient light glow that emanates upward and diminishes views of the clear night sky. If uncontrolled, light spill and ambient light glow can disturb wildlife in natural habitat areas (County of Santa Cruz 2017).

Lighting creates a nuisance as forms of unwanted light in the night sky around and above developed urban areas, including glare, light trespass, sky glow, and over lighting. Views of the night sky are an important part of the natural environment. Artificial lighting from urbanized sources can alter the rural landscape to cause lighting of the nighttime sky and reduction of visibility of stars. Spillover lighting refers to artificial lighting on buildings or in parking area that spills over onto adjacent properties.

Excessive light and glare can also be visually disruptive to humans and nocturnal animal species, and often reflects an unnecessarily high level of energy consumption.

Glare is caused by either direct light from the sun or moon, artificial light sources (direct glare) or by a reflective surface (reflective glare). In urban areas, glare can be caused by reflective surfaces on buildings, vehicles, and pavement. In rural and semi-developed areas, natural sources, including water bodies and the ocean, are the primary source of glare. Land cover, including soil, row crops, orchards, pasture, and forests produce varying levels of glare based on surface area, reflectiveness, and coloring. Areas of dense natural vegetation tend to produce the least amount of glare. Where land has been denuded of natural vegetation for agriculture, light and glare are notably higher. Similarly, greenhouses in agricultural areas can be another primary source of glare (County of Santa Cruz 2017).

## 4.1.2 Regulatory Framework

### 4.1.2.1 State Regulations

#### California Scenic Highway Program

California's Scenic Highway Program was designed to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors. Jurisdictions nominating a Scenic Highway for official designation have in place or adopt ordinances to preserve the scenic quality of the corridor, including policies to preserve scenic resources through land use regulations, site planning, control of outdoor advertising (including a ban on billboards), grading, and measures to direct structural design and appearance (California Streets and Highways Code § 260 et seq.). Eligible State Scenic Highways within Santa Cruz County are described above in Section 4.1.1.3.

### 4.1.2.2 Local Regulations

#### County of Santa Cruz General Plan / Local Coastal Program

The County of Santa Cruz General Plan/LCP is a comprehensive, long-term planning document for the unincorporated areas of the county and includes the County's LCP, which was certified by the California Coastal Commission in 1994. The Conservation and Open Space Element of the County's existing General Plan/LCP includes objectives and policies that address visual resources. The policies and programs under Objectives 5.10a and 5.10b address the protection of visual resources and designate scenic roads in the county. The existing General Plan/LCP also includes an optional Community Design Element (Chapter 8), which contains policies related to controlling aesthetic impacts related to residential, commercial, and industrial development. The proposed project integrates the existing Community Design Element into the proposed Built Environment (BE) Element, integrating existing policies and implementation strategies from the existing Community Design Element, while adding new ones related to urban character, neighborhood scale, and design review considerations. The project also includes a new ARC Element to replace the existing Conservation and Open Space Element, with amendments to some of the existing goals, policies, and implementation strategies as described in Chapter 3 of this EIR and further reviewed in Section 4.1.3.3 below.

## Santa Cruz County Code (SCCC)

### *Chapter 13.10, Zoning Regulations*

The County's zoning regulations contained in Chapter 13.10 of the SCCC regulates development and new structures. Part of the purpose of this chapter is to protect the character, stability, and satisfactory interrelationships of residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, and open space areas of the county and to protect the natural environment. The scope of this chapter contains provisions to:

- (A) Regulate the use of buildings, structures and land for industry, business, residences, agriculture, recreation areas, and open space to promote safety as well as the enjoyment of scenic beauty and use of natural resources, and other purposes.
- (B) Regulate signs and billboards.
- (C) Regulate location, height, bulk, number of stories and size of buildings and structures; the size and use of lots, yards, courts and other open spaces; the percentage of a lot which may be occupied by a building or structure; and the intensity of land use.
- (D) Establish requirements for off-street parking and loading.

Development standards provided for each zone district also help to ensure that new development is compatible with community character. Development density and land divisions are limited in rural residential, timber production, and agricultural areas outside the USL and Rural Services Line (RSL), which protects rural and open space character. Section 13.10.636 of the SCCC includes design criteria for greenhouse development, and Section 13.10.650 provides design criteria for cannabis operations.

In addition, Chapter 13.10 includes regulations related to lighting for certain uses, including: required street lighting in residential neighborhoods (13.10.324.1[F]); lighting for emergency shelters (13.10.363); lighting standards for loading areas (13.10.554); lighting in signage (13.10.581); lighting in temporary tents (13.10.616); lighting at wineries (13.10.637); lighting of cannabis operations (13.10.650); and mobile home park lighting (13.10.685).

A number of amendments are proposed as part of the Sustainability Update to development standards in different zone districts as summarized in Chapter 3, Project Description, and further discussion below in Section 4.1.3.3, Project Impacts.

### *Chapter 13.11, Site, Architectural, and Landscape Design Review*

Chapter 13.11 requires design review and provides detailed guidelines on architectural and landscape design for new commercial, industrial, and institutional development and larger redevelopment projects, for most residential subdivisions, and for three or more residential units. Design review is also required single residential units on sites adjacent to scenic roads or within the viewshed of a scenic road, or located on a coastal bluff or ridgeline, and single-family dwellings larger than 5,000 sf. It stipulates criteria for desired building design (e.g., massing, building silhouette, space between

buildings, scale, character, and proportion/composition of projections, recesses, doors, windows). It also notes that the finish materials should be compatible with the character of surrounding uses in terms of texture and color.

The Chapter also provides guidance for site design to protect scenic resources. Section 13.11.072, Site Design, which will be incorporated into new section 13.11.070 as part of the proposed project, states that new design is to be visually compatible and integrated with the character of the surrounding area. As the design review process is discretionary, conditions of approval may be required for projects to meet the site design objectives. This section also provides guidance for preserving and enhancing natural site features such as mature trees, rock outcroppings, significant natural vegetation, and riparian corridors throughout the county. Clustered design is encouraged to preserve open space and protect natural amenities. Where feasible, development is to be sited to protect public views. Regulations protect ridgelines by requiring that hilltop and hillside development be integrated into the silhouette of the existing terrain. Building height and placement may be regulated as needed to protect the natural scenic character of the ridgetop. Development proposed in a scenic resource area outside the USL and RSL is to be sited such that it does not block or adversely impact significant public views and scenic character.

Section 13.11.074(D)(1) of the SCC, which will be retained as section 13.11.070(C)(4) as part of the proposed project, requires that all site, building, security and landscape lighting be directed onto the site and away from adjacent properties. Light sources shall not be visible from adjacent properties. Light sources can be shielded by landscaping, structure, fixture design or other physical means. Building and security lighting shall be integrated into the building design. The regulations also specify that all lighted parking and circulation areas shall utilize low-rise light standards or light fixtures attached to the building. Light standards to a maximum height of 15 feet are allowed. Furthermore, area lighting shall be high-pressure sodium vapor, metal halide, fluorescent, or equivalent energy-efficient fixtures.

A number of amendments are proposed as part of the Sustainability Update to design review requirements in Chapter 13.11 as summarized in Chapter 3, Project Description, and further discussion below in Section 4.1.3.3, Project Impacts.

### *Chapter 13.20, Coastal Zone Regulations*

Chapter 13.20 of the SCC includes design criteria for development in the coastal zone and in scenic resource areas. All applicable and/or required development standards and design criteria of Chapters 13.10 and 13.11 of the SCC shall be met in addition to the criteria of this section. Sections 13.20.141 and 13.20.142 define design criteria for Bonny Doon and Swanton Road special scenic areas, respectively. Section 13.20.143 defines special community design criteria for Davenport. Design criteria also is included for the other special scenic areas: Harbor, East Cliff Village, Seacliff, Rio Del Mar Esplanade, Pleasure Point, and Seascape Beach.



Section 13.20.130 establishes the following design criteria that apply to projects located in the coastal zone:

- 1) **Visual Compatibility.** This section requires development to be sited, designed and landscaped to be visually compatible and integrated with the character of surrounding neighborhoods or areas with application of design features to achieve building facade articulation, such as breaking up the design with some areas of exterior wall modulation, varied rooflines, offsets, and projections that provide shadow patterns, smaller second story elements set back from the first story, and appropriate surface treatments such as wood/wood-like siding or shingles.
- 2) **Minimum Site Disturbance.** This section requires grading, earth moving, and removal of major vegetation to be minimized and retention of mature trees over six inches in diameter is encouraged. Special landscape features (rock outcroppings, prominent natural landforms, tree groupings) shall be retained.
- 3) **Ridgeline Development.** This section requires hilltop and hillside development to be integrated into the silhouette of the existing backdrop such as the terrain, landscaping, natural vegetation, and other structures. Heights and placement of buildings and landscaping shall be restricted to protect ridgelines and to prevent projections above the ridgeline that are visible from public roads or other public areas. Land divisions that create parcels whose only building site would lead to development that would be exposed on a ridgetop shall not be permitted. Land divisions shall be appropriately conditioned to prohibit ridgeline development in all cases.
- 4) **Landscaping.** This section requires landscaping that provides visual interest and articulation to complement surrounding landscaping, to screen and/or soften the visual impact of development, and to help improve and enhance visual resources, consistent with water-efficient landscape regulations.
- 5) **Upper Building Stories.** This section requires siting and design of structures with more than one story that is located in significant public viewsheds (including adjacent to shoreline fronting roads, public accessways, parks, beaches, trails, natural areas, etc.) so that upper stories do not adversely impact such significant public viewsheds and community character.
- 6) **Front Yard Setbacks.** The regulations also allow front-yard averaging only where the front setback does not adversely impact significant public viewsheds (including those associated with shoreline fronting roads, public accessways, parks, beaches, trails, natural areas, etc.) and community character.
- 7) **Public Views.** This section requires that development be sited and designed so that it does not block or significantly adversely impact significant public views and scenic character to avoid view degradation and to maximize the effectiveness of topography and landscaping to prevent impacts to significant public views.

In addition to the criteria above that apply throughout the coastal zone, the following design criteria provided in SCC 13.20.130(C) apply to all development proposed outside of USL and the RSL located in mapped scenic resource areas or determined to be in a scenic resource area during project review:

- 1) **Location of Development.** Development shall be located, if possible, on parts of the site not visible or least visible from the public view. Development shall not block views of the shoreline and/or ocean from scenic roads, turnouts, rest stops, or vista point.
- 2) **Site Planning.** Development shall be sited and designed to fit the physical setting so that its presence is subordinate to the natural character of the site, including through appropriately maintaining natural features (e.g., streams, riparian corridors, major drainages, mature trees, dominant vegetative communities, rock outcroppings, prominent natural landforms, tree groupings, etc.) and requiring appropriate setbacks therefrom. Screening and landscaping suitable to the site shall be used to soften the visual impact of development unavoidably sited in the public viewshed.
- 3) **Building Design.** Structures shall be designed to fit the topography of the site with minimal grading and use of pitched roofs is encouraged. Natural materials and colors which blend with the surrounding area shall be used.
- 4) **Large Agricultural Structures.** The visual impact of large agricultural structures shall be minimized by:
  - (a) Locating the structure within or near an existing group of buildings.
  - (b) Using materials and colors which blend with the building cluster, or the natural vegetative cover, or landform where there is no vegetative cover, of the site.
  - (c) Using landscaping to screen or soften the appearance of the structure.
- 5) **Restoration.** This section requires elimination or mitigation of unsightly, visually disruptive or degrading elements such as junk heaps, unnatural obstructions, grading scars, or structures incompatible with the area shall be included in site development, where feasible.
- 6) **Signs.** This section requires that signs minimize disruption of the scenic qualities of the viewshed, including by not blocking or having a significant adverse impact on significant public views and be consistent with the sign regulations of the SCCC.

The regulations also include design criteria that apply to all projects located on blufftops and/or visible from beaches. In particular, bluff-top development must be of sufficient distance to be out of sight from the shoreline, and if such a setback is infeasible, to not be visually intrusive. The scenic integrity of open beaches shall be maintained.

#### *Title 16, Environmental and Resource Protection*

Several chapters in Title 16 that regulate development in natural resource or natural hazard areas also protect the scenic qualities of these areas. Grading regulations provided in Chapter 16.20 are intended in part to protect the natural appearance of grading projects. Chapter 16.22, Erosion Control, limits land clearing to that necessary for the proposed development, protecting natural vegetation throughout the county. Chapter 16.30, Riparian Corridor and Wetlands Protection, regulates

development in or near riparian corridors and protects the scenic character of these areas. Similarly, Chapter 16.32, Sensitive Habitat Project, regulates and limits development within sensitive habitat areas that also have scenic value such as sandy beaches and coastal dunes, coastal scrub, coastal grasslands, and special forests. Chapter 16.50, Agricultural Land Preservation and Protection, limits land divisions on agricultural land to protect the agricultural viability of commercial agricultural land, which also protects the scenic character of agricultural areas. Chapter 16.42, Historic Preservation, protects designated historic resources throughout the County.

#### *Chapter, 16.34, Significant Trees Protection*

Chapter 16.34 of the SCCC finds that trees within the county’s coastal zone are a valuable resource, and removal of significant trees could reduce scenic beauty and the attractiveness of the area to residents and visitors. The chapter regulates the removal of trees in the coastal zone when not included in the provisions of a discretionary permit. This chapter establishes the type of trees to be protected, the circumstances under which they may be removed, and the procedures for obtaining a permit for their removal. The chapter also protects trees within sensitive habitats in the coastal zone. A “significant tree” is any tree in the USL or RSL that is equal to or greater than 20 inches diameter at breast height (dbh); any tree outside the USL or RSL that is equal to or greater than 40 inches dbh; and any tree located in a sensitive habitat as defined in SCCC Chapter 16.32.

### 4.1.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

#### 4.1.3.1 Thresholds of Significance

The thresholds of significance used to evaluate the impacts of the proposed project related to aesthetics are based on Appendix G of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines and, if applicable, other agency standards, as listed below. A significant impact would occur if the project would:

- AES-1 Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- AES-2 Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.
- AES-3 In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings. In urbanized areas, conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality.
- AES-4 Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

### 4.1.3.2 Analytical Methods

#### Potential Growth Assumptions

Adoption and implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update would not directly result in impacts related to aesthetics. However, the proposed General Plan/LCP amendments include policies that could indirectly lead to future development, resulting in potential impacts related to aesthetics. Amendments to the General Plan/LCP include policies that support new development, mixed-use development, and potential intensified redevelopment, primarily within the USL. Amendments to the SCCC include changes to permitted/allowed uses in some zone districts. The proposed Sustainability Update also includes new County Design Guidelines and amendments to SCCC chapters 13.10 and 13.11, which are intended to control aesthetic impacts of urban development. Amendments to General Plan/LCP land use designations and/or zone districts are proposed for 23 parcels as summarized in Chapter 3, Project Description.

As described in Section 4.0, Introduction to Analyses, this EIR estimates that the proposed project has the potential to accommodate approximately 4,500 housing units over existing conditions as shown on Table 4.0-2, with approximately 75% projected to occur within urban areas. This EIR also estimates the potential to accommodate approximately 6,210,000 square feet of non-residential uses as shown on Table 4.0-3, with approximately 60% expected to occur within urban areas. These forecasts provide an estimate of potential growth that could occur as a result of adoption and implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update for the purpose of evaluation in this EIR. This estimate of growth may or may not occur, and this estimate does not establish a limit to development. Annual limits for residential units are set annually by the County pursuant to Measure J and SCCC provisions as explained in Section 4.13 of this EIR, Population and Housing. Additionally, some of this projected development and growth would occur under the existing General Plan/LCP without the proposed project.

#### EIR Notice of Preparation Comments

Public and agency comments were received during the public scoping period in response to the Notice of Preparation (NOP), which is included in Appendix A. A summary of the comments received during the scoping period for this EIR, as well as written comments received, are included in Appendix B. Comments related to aesthetics and visual quality included the following:

- Comment suggests that an architectural design/review element be included in the General Plan.
- Height restrictions for wireless cell facilities should be addressed.

To the extent that issues identified in public comments involve potentially significant effects on the environment according to CEQA and/or are raised by responsible agencies, they are identified and addressed within this EIR.

### 4.1.3.3 Project Impact Analysis

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**Impact AES-1: Scenic Views (Significance Threshold AES-1).** Adoption and implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. (**Less than Significant**).

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The proposed project would not directly result in new development but could indirectly lead to future development and redevelopment throughout the county, primarily within urban areas within the County's USL. Future development could potentially affect scenic views if new or intensified development blocked scenic views or access to areas that provide or contribute to scenic views, such as ocean views, background mountain and/or ridgetop views, or views of unique natural vegetation communities as seen from public view points. Potential effects could include partial obstruction or total blocking of a scenic vista from specific publicly accessible vantage points or the alteration of the overall scenic vista/corridor itself. The majority of future development would occur within the USL in areas that are already developed and generally located away from the coast or significant public scenic views, although some future development could be located in the coastal zone and other scenic areas of the county.

The proposed project retains, and in some cases, expands upon existing General Plan/LCP policies and regulations in the SCCC that seek to protect scenic views and vistas, including policies to designate and define visual resource areas having regional public importance. Table 4.1-1 summarizes proposed policies that would protect scenic views through regulation and review of development projects.

Visual resource areas include: vistas from designated scenic roads, Coastal Special Scenic Areas, and unique hydrologic, geologic, and paleontological features. The proposed ARC Element also indicates that ocean views, agricultural fields, wooded forests, open meadows, ridgetops, and mountain hillside views are also public scenic assets that should be identified and considered during development review permit processes (ARC-5.1.1). Development projects proposed in visual resource areas are required to be designed to protect these resources (ARC-5.1.2) and to protect scenic vistas (ARC-5.1.3). Protection of scenic ocean views and agricultural vistas also are required as part of future development projects (ARC-5.1.6 and ARC-5.1.5, respectively).

Policies in the proposed ARC Element also expand the meaning of protection of significant public vistas and public scenic assets to include those that are not mapped and designated as visual resource areas, scenic roads, Coastal Special Scenic Areas, or other unique features, by minimizing disruption of landform and aesthetic character caused by grading operations, timber harvests, utility wires and poles, signs, inappropriate landscaping and structure design (ARC-5.1.3). This policy requires landscaping to screen development and to retain existing public views of vistas and scenic assets over the life of the development whenever feasible, and especially for coastal designated visual resources.

**Table 4.1-1. Proposed and Retained General Plan/LCP Policies that Avoid/Minimize Impacts Related to Scenic Views**

Potential Impact	Policies
Scenic Views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ocean views, agricultural fields, wooded forests, open meadows, ridgetops, and mountain hillside views are public scenic assets that should be considered during development review permit processes. (ARC-5.1.1)</li> <li>• Require development projects in defined visual resource areas to be designed to protect these resources. (ARC-5.1.2)</li> <li>• Protect significant public vistas and public scenic assets and provide landscape screening in scenic vista areas. (ARC-5.1.3)</li> <li>• Preserve agricultural vistas. (ARC-5.1.5)</li> <li>• Preserve ocean vistas. (ARC-5.1.6)</li> <li>• Prohibit permanent structures that would be adversely visible from a public beach. (ARC-5.1.7)</li> <li>• Protect ridgetops and natural landforms and limit impacts on public vistas. (ARC-5.1.8)</li> <li>• Protect agricultural and coastal grassland vistas of the North Coast and Bonny Doon Highway 1 corridor by prohibiting land divisions of mapped grassland habitat. (ARC-5.2.6)</li> <li>• Require design review for public projects visible from scenic roads. (ARC-5.2.7)</li> <li>• Limit sign placement where visible from scenic roads. (ARC-5.2.8-12)</li> <li>• Permit new development in Public Facility/Institutional (P) land use designation consistent with scenic resource protection. (Parks, Recreation + Public Facilities [PPF]-1.1.2)</li> <li>• Allow low-intensity uses compatible with scenic values in the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (O-R) land use designation (PPF-1.2.1, 1.2.2)</li> <li>• Discourage new transmission lines that impinge on scenic quality (PPF-4.6.2)</li> </ul>

Designation of Coastal Special Scenic Areas and Coastal Special Communities continue to include the Bonny Doon formations and Swanton Road area. The amendments also clarify that Coastal Special Communities also include the Harbor area, East Cliff Village tourist area, Seacliff Beach area, Rio Del Mar Esplanade, Pleasure Point Community mapped residential and commercial areas, and Seascape Beach Estates (ARC 5.1.11).

In addition to existing and proposed policies, the existing County regulations in the SCCC also require that development in the coastal zone be sited and designed to protect scenic coastal public views and significant trees, and that greenhouse development in any area be designed to not block public coastal views. Site design regulations in SCCC Chapter 13.11 that protect scenic areas, hilltops and ridgelines, and the public viewshed throughout the county are proposed to be retained or strengthened. Title 16 regulations for development in natural resource areas and hazardous areas would be retained, continuing to protect scenic vistas in these areas.

Adoption and implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update would not directly result in new development, but new development accommodated by the proposed project could result in adverse impacts to public scenic views if any are present. None of the 23 parcels proposed for General Plan/LCP and/or zoning map re-designation are located on sites that are part of a scenic public view. Nonetheless, with compliance with local regulations in addition to implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update policies and implementation strategies summarized on Table 4.1-1, as well as required future environmental review of specific development projects, future development would avoid adverse impacts to scenic views, and the impact would be considered *less-than-significant impact*.

### *Mitigation Measures*

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

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**Impact AES-2: Scenic Resources (Significance Threshold AES-2).** Adoption and implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway. (***Less than Significant***).

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As indicated in Section 4.1.1.3, there are no state-designated scenic highways in Santa Cruz County. However, County-designated scenic roads and other potential scenic resources are considered in this section.

The proposed project retains designation of County roads that are “valued for their vistas” as summarized in Section 4.1.1.3 above, except for one change. For Highway 1, amendments included in the new ARC Element changes the location of the local scenic designation of Highway 1 from San Mateo County to Monterey County to the area north of Western Drive to San Mateo County and south of Bay Avenue to Monterey County. The area removed is a segment of Highway 1 that extends through the urbanized area of the county. There are no coastal ocean views along this segment, and the visual quality is characterized by a mix of visible urban development. This urban stretch of the highway was once considered scenic due to the presence of mature trees. However, many of these trees have been eliminated due to disease. Although trees are present in areas, views along this segment of the highway are mostly of development with some trees. There are no scenic views of the ocean, distant mountains or other unique natural features. The proposed Sustainability Update does retain the other portions of the Highway that are in the unincorporated county areas in the list of roads with scenic vistas. These areas included the North Coast area with sweeping panoramic ocean and mountain views and the southern portion of the county that includes views of distant mountains and natural features. Therefore, the removal of the urban segment of Highway 1 would not be considered to have indirect effects on scenic resources.

With regards to other scenic areas and resources in the county, the proposed project would not directly result in new development but could indirectly lead to future development and redevelopment throughout the county, primarily within urban areas within the USL, which could impact scenic resources. As previously indicated, the proposed project retains policies that designate and define visual

resource areas having regional public importance, which include: vistas from designated scenic roads, Coastal Special Scenic Areas, and unique hydrologic, geologic, and paleontological features. The proposed ARC Element also indicates that ocean views, agricultural fields, wooded forests, open meadows, ridgetops, and mountain hillside views are also public scenic assets that should be identified and considered during development review permit processes (ARC-5.1.1). Development projects proposed in visual resource areas are required to be designed to protect these resources (ARC-5.1.2). Table 4.1-2 summarizes other policies directed at protecting scenic resources.

**Table 4.1-2. Proposed and Retained General Plan/LCP Policies that Avoid/Minimize Impacts Related to Scenic Resources**

Potential Impact	Policies
Scenic Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage large-scale agricultural structures to minimize visual impacts on designated scenic roads, beaches, or recreation facilities. (ARC-1.5.4)</li> <li>• Preserve wooded hillsides that serve as backdrop for new development. (ARC-5.1.4)</li> <li>• Protect ridgetops and natural landforms and impacts on visual resources, public vistas and scenic assets. (ARC-5.1.8)</li> <li>• Maintain the County’s Significant Tree Removal standards. (ARC-5.1.9)</li> <li>• Require siting and landscaping to mitigate development visible from rural scenic roads (ARC-5.2.2, ARC-5.2.3) and Highway 1 scenic corridor (ARC-5.2.4).</li> <li>• Implement landscaping and grading requirements for land disturbance/grading that is visible from scenic roads to mitigate visual impacts. (ARC-5.2.5)</li> <li>• Discourage signs visible from scenic roads. (ARC-5.2.8)</li> <li>• Require underground placement of new utilities within views from scenic roads. (ARC-5.2.13)</li> </ul>

To implement the change to policy ARC-5.1.1, the definition of “sensitive site” in Chapter 13.11 would be amended to expand design review to single-family dwellings proposed in locations where development may impact public views of the ocean, forests, mountain hillsides, open meadows, or other scenic resources on sites that are not mapped as scenic. Title 16 regulations for development in natural resource areas and hazardous areas would be retained, continuing to protect scenic vistas in these areas. Provisions in Chapter 13.11 for preserving natural site amenities and features would be strengthened, to require retention of significant natural vegetation on site, rather than retaining when appropriate; and to retain mature trees, rock outcroppings and other natural features to the greatest extent feasible, rather than retaining as appropriate.

Additionally, as indicated in the Impact AES-1 discussion, policies in the proposed ARC Element also expand the meaning of protection of significant public vistas and public scenic assets to include those that are not mapped and designated as visual resource areas, scenic roads, Coastal Special Scenic



Areas, or other unique features, by minimizing disruption of landform and aesthetic character caused by grading operations, timber harvests,

Therefore, implementation of the proposed and retained Sustainability Update policies and implementation strategies summarized on Table 4.1-1, existing and amended regulations in the SCCC for design review, zoning district development standards, and regulations for development in natural resource areas, as well as required future environmental review of specific development projects, future development would not result in an adverse impact to scenic resources, and impacts would be considered *less than significant*.

### *Mitigation Measures*

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

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**Impact AES-3: Degradation of Visual Quality (Significance Threshold AES-3).** Adoption and implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views in non-urbanized areas and would not conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality in urban areas. (*Less than Significant*).

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The proposed project would not directly result in new development but could indirectly lead to future development and redevelopment throughout the county, primarily within urban areas within the County's USL, which could degrade the visual quality or character in urban and non-urbanized areas. The threshold of significance is whether a project would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings in non-urbanized areas or conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality for projects in an urbanized area. Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point. The majority of new development is expected in the urbanized area of the county as explained above.

### Non-Urban Areas

Future development within areas of the county outside the USL or RSL would generally be required to comply with policies in the General Plan/LCP as amended by the proposed Sustainability Update, as well as regulations in the SCCC, including standards in SCCC Chapter 13.11 for site design, protection of the public viewshed throughout the county, and protection of scenic areas outside the USL. Development standards including setback requirements and height limits provided in SCCC Chapter 13.10 for residential development in rural areas would be retained, retaining the rural scenic character outside the USL. Existing regulations in SCCC Chapter 13.14, Rural Density Matrix that limit density of development and maintain minimum lot sizes in rural areas would also be retained, further protecting rural scenic character. As discussed in Impacts AES-1 and AES-2, compliance with policies and regulations would not result in adverse effects to scenic views or scenic resources identified and protected in the General Plan/LCP. In addition, design review would be required for some types of projects, including design review of projects on sites that may impact public views of scenic resources. Therefore, compliance with these policies and regulations would ensure that future development outside of urban areas would not substantially degrade the visual character or quality of public views.

The proposed project also includes a number of revised and retained SCCC sections that require consideration of visual impacts related to agricultural-related structural development. Section 13.10.632 of the SCCC continues to provide standards for agricultural processing facilities, and specifically requires mitigation measures for any potentially significant visual impacts of facilities greater than 5,000 square feet in size that would be located within visual resource areas. Measures include vegetative screening or other landscaping, use of materials that produce less glare, elevated topography, and/or arrangement of structures on the site to minimize bulky appearance. A new section 13.10.635 has been created to specifically address standards for storage of agricultural equipment of supplies, and continues to require that visual impacts on designated scenic roads, beaches, or recreation facilities be minimized by measures such as locating agricultural storage structures and operations among existing groups of structures; using materials and colors which blend with existing buildings or the environment; and/or using design and landscaping to screen and soften the appearance of structures and equipment. Section 13.10.636 modifies standards for greenhouses and specifies that the regulations also apply to hoop houses. New greenhouses and hoop houses over 500 square feet in area, where allowed pursuant to a building or discretionary use permit, would be required to provide mitigations or project modifications for any potentially significant visual impacts that would be visible from designated scenic roads, beaches or recreation facilities. Such measures may include vegetative screening or other landscaping, materials which that produce less glare, berming, and/or arrangement of structures on the site to minimize bulky appearance. Greenhouses and hoop houses would not be allowed in locations where they would block public ocean views. Thus, compliance with existing and proposed regulations related to agricultural structures would minimize degradation of the visual quality of public views in non-urban, agricultural areas.

### Urbanized Areas

Development in urbanized areas that are within the County's USL would be subject to new and existing policies in the proposed BE Element of the General Plan/LCP, which are summarized in Table 4.1-3. Specifically, Objective 4.1 and its accompanying policies provides guidance on objective development standards to ensure quality design of development projects. Design review is required for specified types of development to ensure consistency with the design standards in the SCCC and proposed County Design Guidelines (BE-4.1.2). Policy BE-4.1.4 requires new residential infill development to consider scale and size of the existing surrounding neighborhood and requires appropriate building massing, setbacks, and landscape buffers where development projects introduce a change in neighborhood character in order to reduce the perception of bulk and height. The proposed project also maintains permit requirements and required design review for projects exceeding certain scale and scope criteria, considering standards and criteria of the SCCC, County Design Guidelines, and area-specific plans (BE-4.1b) In addition, single-family residences larger than 5,000 square feet and size would require a site development permit.

Urban development would also be required to comply with SCCC regulations, especially those pertaining to design review and development in the coastal. Development projects would be evaluated on site-specific conditions. The proposed project retains existing policies and regulations that serve to

protect scenic quality, and thus, would not indirectly lead to future development that would conflict with applicable regulations governing scenic quality.

**Table 4.1-3. Proposed and Retained General Plan/LCP Policies that Avoid/Minimize Impacts Related to Visual Quality**

Potential Impact	Policies and Implementation Strategies
<p><b>Degradation of Visual Quality</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require development projects in defined visual resource areas to be designed to protect these resources. (ARC-5.1.2)</li> <li>• Require design review for certain types of development for consistency with design standards in the SCCC and County Design Guidelines. (BE-4.1.2)</li> <li>• Require new residential infill development to consider scale and size of existing surrounding neighborhood, and provide appropriate building massing, setbacks and landscape buffering to reduce the perception of bulk and height if changes would occur. (B-4.1.4)</li> <li>• Landscape design should relate to the building and the site design and preserve existing mature trees and native vegetation as appropriate. (BE-4.1.5)</li> <li>• Maintain permit requirements and require design review for projects exceeding certain scale and scope criteria, considering standards and criteria of the SCCC, County Design Guidelines, and area-specific plans. (BE-4.1.b)</li> <li>• Require consideration of neighborhood character and transitions to surrounding development as a part of the design review process. (BE-4.1e)</li> <li>• Require a Large Dwelling site development permit for new single-family residences larger than 5,000 square feet and additions larger than 10% of existing residential structures larger than 5,000 square feet. (BE-4.1f)</li> <li>• Encourage clustering of buildings to preserve or enhance natural amenities, resources and open space. In rural areas on parcels where dwelling groups are allowed, require clustering as appropriate to minimize grading, impervious surfaces, and overall site disturbance. (BE-4.2.3)</li> </ul>

The proposed Sustainability Update includes amendments to section 13.10.333 of the SCCC regarding building heights. Commercial building height standards remain at three stories in all commercial zones, but the actual heights are proposed to be increased from 35 to 40 feet in all commercial zones, except up to 50 feet in the new C-3 zone. The increased height is intended to accommodate larger first floors, consistent with 40-foot heights proposed in the SCCC. In the C3 zone district, a minimum 15-foot first floor height would be required. The height limit for some residential development would also increase. Currently, the standard height limit for multifamily projects is 28 feet. Heights of up to 33 feet may be allowed for multi-family projects subject to Zoning Administrator approval, and heights may be increased if all yards are increased five feet for each foot over the 28-foot height limit. As proposed, height requirements would be simplified, with a height limit of 40 feet for the new Residential Flex (RF) zone district, and a height limit of 35 feet for higher-density RM districts (RM-1.5 to RM-4).

While some future buildings could be taller than currently permitted, new multi-family residential developments of three or more units and commercial and mixed-use developments within the USL and

RSL, including additions and exterior remodels, would be required to comply with the proposed County Design Guidelines. These Design Guidelines, which are part of the proposed project, provide overarching guidelines for all project types and specific design guidelines for the following types of developments: multi-family residential (including for the proposed new RF one district), as well as mixed-use, commercial, and workplace flex for light industrial, creative office and retail uses. The County Design Guidelines would be adopted as a separate document, but are incorporated by reference in the revised SCCC (section 13.11.060).

The proposed Guidelines include the following elements:

- Overarching Design Guidelines. These guidelines apply to all project types subject to the Design Guidelines and provide design guidance for: site planning; building design; open space; community character; neighborhood transitions; access, circulation and parking; landscaping and sustainability; and trash enclosures/utilities.
- Multi-Family Residential Design Guidelines. These guidelines are tailored toward infill multi-family projects (including development in the RF Zone District) and address design elements that include: frontage design, neighborhood compatibility and accessibility. The guidelines also provide for appropriate transitions to lower-density residential development, including stepbacks for upper stories and appropriate landscape screening.
- Mixed-Use Design Guidelines. Mixed-use development is an efficient and effective pattern that combines residential development with commercial and office uses. The guidelines in this chapter addresses the complexities of designing to cater toward multiple uses on one site. Design measures for vertical and horizontal mixed-use typologies are outlined.
- Commercial Design Guidelines. Commercial development is addressed as new development as well as repurposed/retrofitted development, described as “infill” in the design guidelines. These guidelines focus special attention on site design, access and circulation, building design and public gathering spaces for different types of commercial developments.
- Workplace Flex Design Guidelines. A new commercial development typology to the County, the “Workplace Flex” guidelines establish criteria to facilitate the development of projects to be used for light industrial, creative office and retail uses. These differ from standard commercial developments and require additional design guidelines to guide innovative, creative, and unique development projects.

Additionally, the proposed SCCC revisions require that development on commercially zoned parcels located along the mapped Pleasure Point commercial corridor (Portola Drive between 26th Avenue and 41st Avenue and 41st Avenue between Portola Drive and the Capitola city limit) follow the guidance provided in the Pleasure Point Commercial Corridor Vision and Guiding Design Principles (County of Santa Cruz 2018), incorporated as Appendix B of the Countywide Design Guidelines. The revisions also include special development standards for this area regarding maximum square footage for individual tenant spaces (2,000 square feet), height (height exceptions or variances are not allowed), and setbacks from abutting residential zone districts (30 feet for commercial buildings, 20 feet for

residential buildings, with third stories set back an additional 5 feet), which have been incorporated into commercial regulations in SCCC Chapter 13.10.

The proposed County Design Guidelines would provide additional direction for the siting and design of new structures, and would be referenced in Chapter 13.11 of the SCCC. In addition, design review pursuant to Chapter 13.11 continues to be required for residential dwellings exceeding 5,000 square feet, residential development of three or more units, commercial, industrial and public facility developments, and land divisions. A new Site Development Permit would also be required for these projects, allowing the decision-maker to apply conditions as needed to protect scenic character and visual resources. Design review and a Site Development Permit would also be required for single family dwellings on sites with the potential to impact public views of scenic resources.

## Parcel Map Changes

### *Portola Drive*

Nine of the 23 parcels proposed for General Plan/LCP and/or zoning map are located along Portola Drive within the USL and are proposed to be redesignated and zoned from commercial or lower-density residential uses to high-density residential uses under the new urban high density “flex” residential (R-UHF) General Plan /LCP land use designation and RF Zone District. The new zone district would allow building heights of up to 40 feet compared to 28 and 35 feet in other residential zones. The existing commercial designations for these properties allow three stories, but building heights are proposed to be increased from 35 to 40 feet in all commercial zones as part of the proposed project. Thus, potential future development of these parcels would have the same building height under either existing commercial with proposed SCCC revisions or proposed RF zone. In either case, buildings could be taller than buildings in adjacent residential neighborhoods. However, development would be required to comply with the County Design Guidelines, which include design principles for the Pleasure Point Commercial Corridor (Appendix B of the Guidelines). Specifically, the Guidelines require new residential buildings along Portola Drive to provide a minimum 20-foot buffer between the back of the building and the property line facing existing residential parcels to provide a neighborhood transition. An additional 5-foot setback from the property line would be required for a third story of any commercial or residential building adjoining a residential lot. Compliance with General Plan/LCP policies, SCCC requirements for design review, and the proposed County Design Guidelines would minimize visual effects of potentially taller buildings in this location.

### *Thurber Lane/Soquel Drive Parcel*

As described in Section 3.5.4.2, the parcel on the northeast corner of Soquel Drive and Thurber Lane is proposed to be redesignated to a mix of commercial and high-density residential uses from existing neighborhood commercial, office, and open space designations. For the purposes of the EIR, it is assumed that the northern portion of the property would be rezoned to the proposed high-density residential RF Zone District. The southern portion of the site would be redesignated and rezoned to a more intense commercial zone, such as Community Commercial (C-2), which is intended to

accommodate a range of potential commercial uses, including neighborhood-serving uses, offices, retail, restaurants, and visitor accommodations. However, no specific development plans are proposed at this time.

The site currently has an unnamed ephemeral stream running from the north end to the south end of the site, which is piped to the north and south of this property. Impacts at this site are reviewed under two sets of development assumptions, one with the stream and related buffer area maintained as a natural feature, and the other with the stream being piped in an underground storm drain system. The site is not located in an area with views of the ocean or other scenic views.

Under the first scenario, the existing unnamed stream and riparian corridor would remain as currently exists with development sited outside of the riparian corridor. Given the placement of this stream, site development essentially would be located on the western portion of the site with the potential for limited use in the eastern portion of the site. The stream and riparian corridor could function as both in a drainage capacity and as an open-space feature in any future proposed development. In the second scenario, the stream would be piped in an underground storm drain system and the existing channel would be filled that would enable the entire site would be developed. Under the proposed new urban high density “flex” residential (R-UHF) General Plan/LCP land use designation and RF zone district, building heights would be 40 feet for both the residential and the commercial portions of the site. In order to achieve the same level of potential development in the first (unpiped) scenario as could be achieved under the second scenario, a variance to building height or other development standards would likely be necessary. This option could result in construction of taller buildings than otherwise permitted in the underlying zone district, but would not substantially degrade the visual quality of public views. While the site is currently in a locally mapped scenic area along Highway 1, this designation is proposed to be removed in this area due to the changes in the viewshed along the highway, as discussed in the analysis under Impact AES-2. In either development scenario, compliance with SCCC requirements for design review and adherence to the proposed County Design Guidelines would ensure that a future project on this site would not result in conflicts with policies or regulations governing scenic quality.

## Conclusion

While future development resulting from the proposed project could potentially result in impacts to the existing visual character of surrounding areas in non-urbanized locations, compliance with SCCC requirements to mitigate significant visual impacts of new development on coastal or other public scenic views through screening, landscaping, and other measures would prevent substantial degradation of the visual quality of these areas. In urbanized areas, future development would be required to comply with the County’s design review procedures and requirements, including adherence to the new County Design Guidelines and Site Development Permit requirements, and thus, would not conflict with applicable zoning and regulations governing scenic quality of urban areas. Therefore, implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update and future development accommodated by the proposed project would not result in an adverse impact to scenic resources or conflicts with policies and regulations governing scenic quality, which would be considered a *less-than-significant impact*.

### *Mitigation Measures*

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

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**Impact AES-4: Light and Glare (Significance Threshold AES-4).** Adoption and implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update would not create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. **(No Impact).**

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The proposed project would not directly result in new development but could indirectly lead to future development and redevelopment throughout the county, primarily within urban areas within the County's USL. New development could result in exterior lighting on buildings or within parking areas. New sources of lighting can be a nuisance to sensitive viewers through light spill or can create an ambient light glow that emanates upward and diminishes views of the clear night sky. If uncontrolled, light spill and ambient light glow can disturb wildlife in natural habitat areas.

The majority of new development accommodated by the project is projected to occur within urban areas. While some development would be expected to occur within rural areas, the proposed project would not result in changes in land use designations that would lead to intensified development. In rural areas potential nighttime light sources are typically limited to outdoor lighting on structures, as well as greenhouse lighting in agricultural areas. In urban and developed areas, common nighttime light sources included street lighting, building lighting, and parking light lighting.

As previously indicated, section 13.11.074(D)(1) of the SCCC, which will be moved to section 13.11.070(C)(4), requires that all site, building, security, and landscape lighting be directed onto the site and away from adjacent properties. Light sources shall not be visible from adjacent properties. Light sources can be shielded by landscaping, structure, fixture design or other physical means. Building and security lighting shall be integrated into the building design. The regulations also specify that all lighted parking and circulation areas shall utilize low-rise light standards or light fixtures attached to the building. Light standards to a maximum height of 15 feet are allowed. While the project proposes some amendments to SCCC Chapter 13.11 related to structural design standards and guidelines, these existing regulations regarding lighting remain unchanged.

Future development projects would be required to comply with existing SCCC requirements regarding lighting, which would prevent creation of substantial new sources of light. Furthermore, the proposed project does not include any General Plan/LCP or SCCC amendments that would change land uses or development standards regarding lighting that could lead to new sources of substantial light. Structures such as greenhouses, if not properly designed, can lead to glare. However, existing development standards in the SCCC regulate development of greenhouse development, and section 13.10.636 specifically requires mitigation measures, such as vegetative screening or materials, to avoid visual impacts including the generation of glare. This section and other sections regulating lighting are not changed by the proposed project. Therefore, compliance with County regulations as implemented with future development projects would avoid impacts related to generation of light and glare, and the project would result in *no impact*.

### *Mitigation Measures*

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

#### 4.1.3.4 Cumulative Impact Analysis

As discussed in Section 4.0, the cumulative setting includes growth and development within the unincorporated county as well as the four incorporated cities located in Santa Cruz County. The cumulative setting for visual impacts includes potential future development under both the proposed project in addition to future development within the cities. However, cumulative development that could potentially affect scenic views and resources or result in substantial creation of light and glare, generally would be site-specific in nature and would not contribute to cumulative impacts outside the project's immediate area of impact. Cumulative development within the cities in Santa Cruz County would be subject to compliance with design policies and regulations in effect in those areas. Therefore, no significant cumulative impacts related to aesthetics to which the proposed project would contribute have been identified.

#### 4.1.4 References

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