

4.1 AESTHETICS

4.1.1 INTRODUCTION

This section describes existing visual conditions at the project site and in the surrounding area and analyzes the effects of the Hyatt Place project (project) on visual character and scenic views, outlines standard conditions of project approval, and proposes mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts associated with aesthetic resources. This section also evaluates new sources of light and glare. Information regarding aesthetics and visual quality was obtained from the following sources:

- City of Half Moon Bay Local Coastal Program & Land Use Plan, 2021
- Half Moon Bay Existing Conditions Report, 2014
- Proposed Project Photo simulations prepared by Square One Productions in 2019 and FastCast in 2020
- Assessing Visual Resource Policies for Projects within 200 Yards of Highway One Memo, 2019

Project consistency with the 2021 Local Coastal Land Use Plan (LCLUP) is analyzed and included below. The LCLUP was updated and adopted by City Council in October 2020 and certified by the California Coastal Commission (CCC) in April 2021. The updated LCLUP comprises the City's reexamined and updated policy approach for carrying out the Coastal Act in a manner that addresses changed conditions since certification of the 1996 LCLUP.

All documents referenced in the draft EIR are available via CD or weblink upon request. The location of the other reference materials is cited at the end of this section. Hard copies of the draft EIR are located at City of Half Moon Bay, Planning Division, 501 Main St, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019.

Comments were received in response to the Notice of Preparation for this draft EIR, comments were submitted regarding the project's visual impacts to the southern entrance to Downtown along State Route 1 (SR-1) and to open space areas. These comments are summarized below and are addressed in this section.

- Potential aesthetic impacts to corridor/highway views and general Coastside views
- Consistency with existing Half Moon Bay character and "small-town" aesthetic

- Loss of coastal and hillside viewsheds
- Potential for the project's location at "gateway" of Half Moon Bay to impact character of the city
- Concerns regarding the hotel being a blight on the landscape

4.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Regional Setting

The project site is located in the San Francisco Bay Area, on the western (ocean) side of the Peninsula, 0.75 miles from the coast. There are several large, regional open spaces to the east of Half Moon Bay, including Rancho Corral de Tierra and Miramontes Ridge Open Space Preserve. The area is generally characterized by the rolling hills bordering the coast and views of the ocean. However, the project site is located in a flat area in the southern part of the city that was previously used for agriculture. A key regional feature which influences the Half Moon Bay aesthetic character is the agricultural heritage of the region exemplified by farms, barns, orchards, nurseries, and greenhouses.

Visual Resources

SR-1 and State Route 92 (SR-92) are the primary access points to and through Half Moon Bay. SR-92 is approximately 1 mile north of the project site. Users of these routes take in their first visual impressions of the city. SR-1 is the primary north-south transportation route through the city. SR-1 is listed as "eligible" for State Scenic Highway status.¹ However, SR-1 is locally designated as a scenic corridor and visual resource in the LCLUP. Views along SR-1 include agricultural uses and open space, mixed with residential neighborhoods and a few roadside businesses. SR-1 also provides the contrast of the rolling hills and shoreline in the distance with the developed areas of the city in the foreground. SR-1 at the southern end of the city is accentuated by the intersection of Main Street located at the southern entryway to the city. The views of distant hillsides and ridgelines of coastal mountains from SR-1 are the prominent visual resources of SR-1 at the project site and are identified as upland slopes in Half Moon Bay Municipal Code.

¹ <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/lap-landscape-architecture-and-community-livability/lap-liv-i-scenic-highways>

Section 18.37.020 of the Visual Resource Protection Standards in the City's Municipal Code identifies the SR-1 corridor as a special resource and provides the following area for visual protection:

Located on both sides of Highway One, for a distance of two hundred yards in those areas where Highway One is designated as a scenic highway by the state of California and in those areas designates on the visual resources overlay map in the City's Local Coastal Program & Land Use Plan.

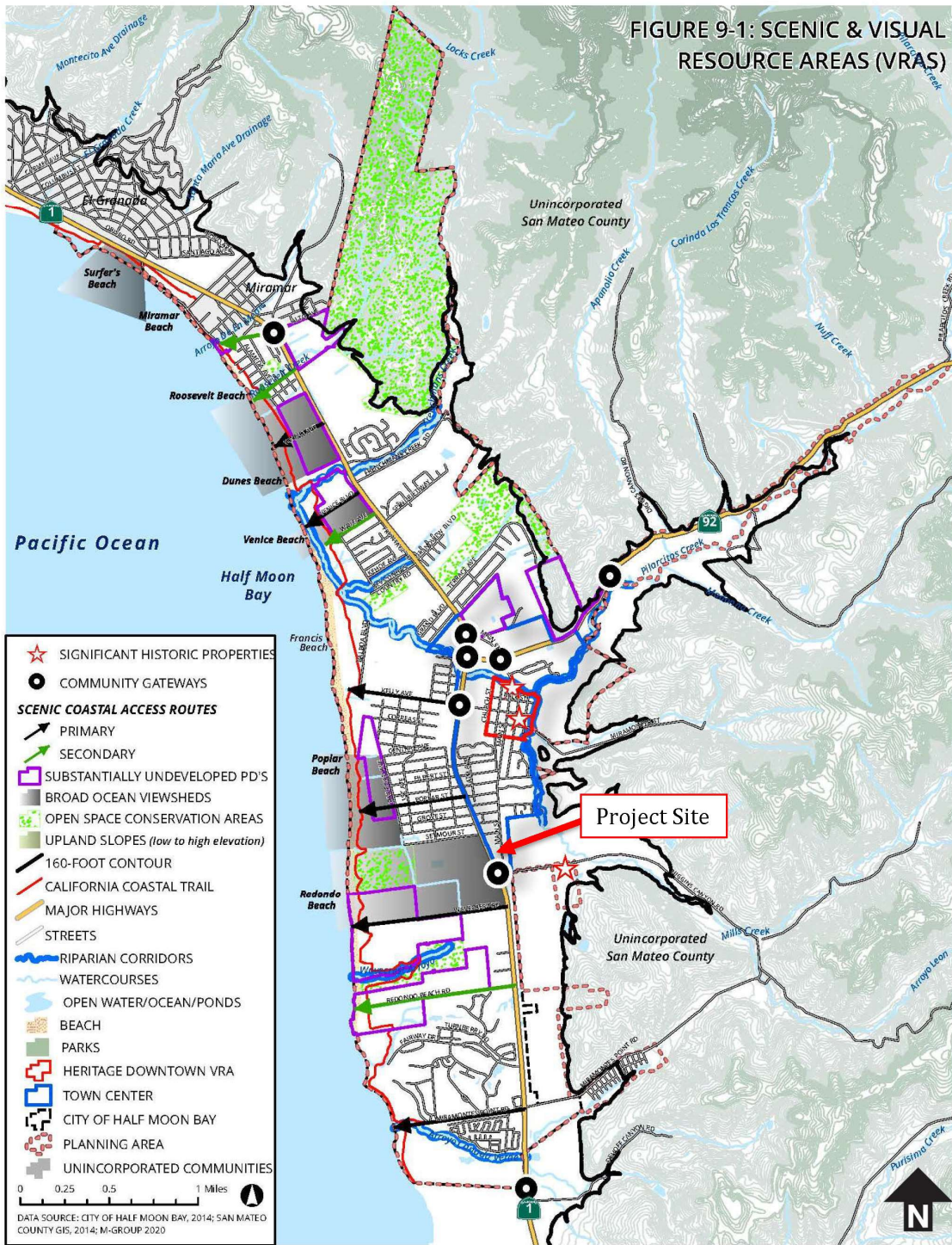
Section 18.37.020 also identifies:

Scenic hillsides which are visible from Highway One and Highway 92, as indicated on the visual resources overlay map. These areas occur include hillside areas above the one hundred sixty-foot elevation contour line which are located:

1. East of the proposed Foothill Boulevard, comprising portions of Carter Hill and Dykstra Ranch properties.
2. Southeast of Pilarcitos Creek and east of Arroyo Leon, comprising a portion of land designated as open space reserve in the land use plan.
3. East of the Sea Haven Subdivision, being a portion of the Gravance property designated urban reserve in the land use plan.
4. East of the Nurseryman's Exchange properties and lower Hester-Miguel lands, comprising all of the upper Hester-Miguel lands designated as open space reserve in the land use plan.

Figure 4.1-1 shows extent of hillsides and ridgelines (shown in light green) in relationship to the project site and subject to zoning regulations and LCLUP policies.

Hyatt Place Half Moon Bay Project



Half Moon Bay Existing Visual Resources

Figure

4.1-1

Source: City of Half Moon Bay, 2014. San Mateo County GIS; M-GROUP 2020

Study Area Visual Setting

As shown in **Figure 4.1-2**, the project site is bordered by Main Street to the east, the intersection of Main Street and SR-1 to the south, SR-1 to the west, and the James Ford Auto Dealership on the adjacent parcel to the north. Across SR-1, the Wavecrest area continues from SR-1 to the ocean. Across Main Street from the project site there is the Coastside Fire Protection District's Station 40 and training facilities, the Coastal Repertory Theater, and multifamily residential development. Farmland extends beyond this development to the east and southeast. Single-family homes extend to the north beyond the auto dealership as shown earlier on **Figure 3-1** in **Chapter 3.0, Project Description**.

The Wavecrest area, which is in land trust ownership, features agricultural land that is visible from the project site. The southern entrance to Downtown, located at the intersection of SR-1 and Higgins Canyon Road at the southern tip of the project site, is a visual gateway which helps define the character of the city. Existing vegetation on the project consists of bottlebrush trees lining the eastern border along Main Street and one Monterey cypress tree at the northwest end of the project site.

Public Views of the Study Area

As described previously, the project site is bordered by residential, commercial, and open space land uses. Public viewpoints of the project site are generally afforded from vehicles traveling along SR-1 and Main Street. In addition to Main Street, other public viewpoints from the east side of the project site are from the City-owned Johnston House and Train Depot property and Higgins Canyon Road.

Four publicly accessible views of the project site were selected to represent public views from off-site locations. **Figure 4.1-2** shows the angle of view for each viewpoint used in the aesthetic analysis of the project site. **Figure 4.1-3** and **Figure 4.1-4** depict the views from these viewpoints and the existing visual character and quality of the project area. Public views from each viewpoint are described below.

Viewpoint 1: Southern Main Street looking southwest

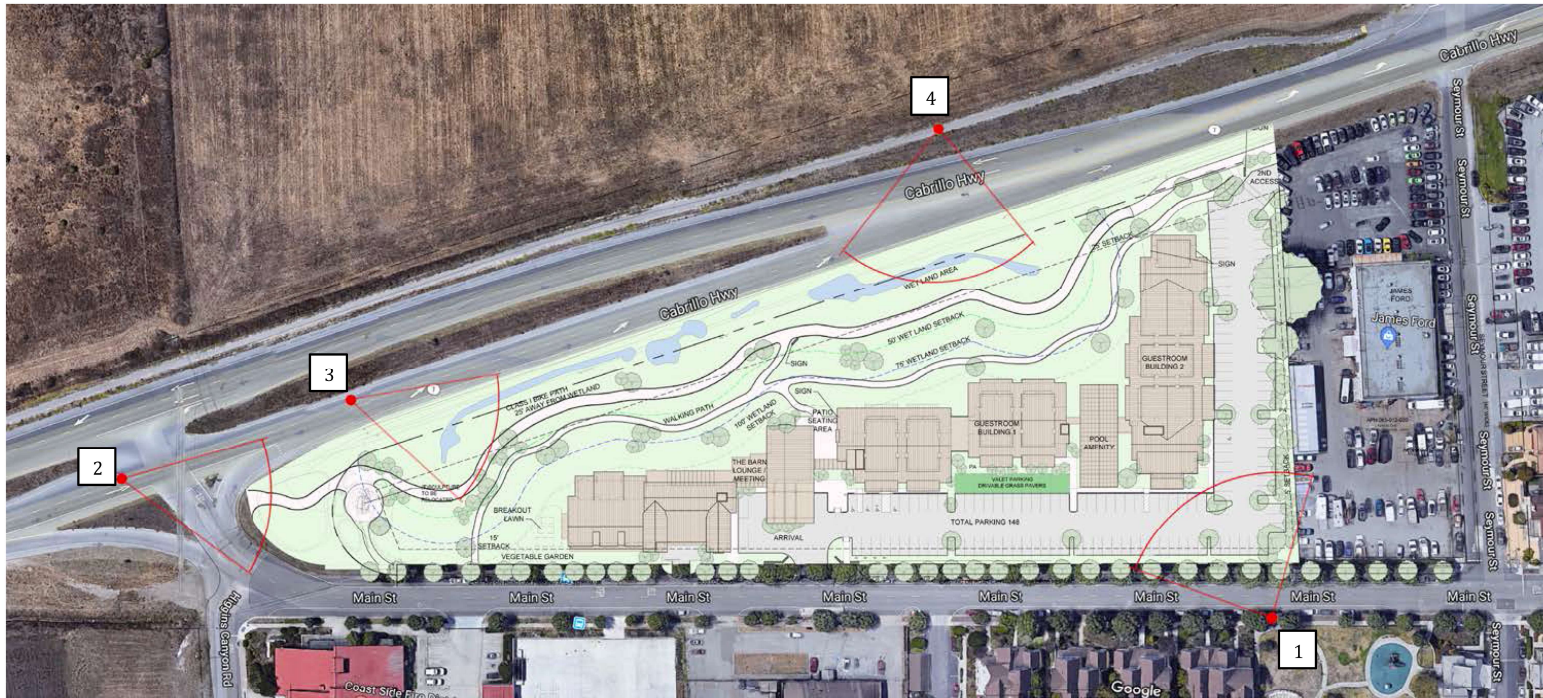
Viewpoint 1 is taken across Main Street looking southwest. Views of the project site include a foreground of bottlebrush trees along Main Street and the two Monterey cypress trees along the project site's northern border (see **Figure 4.1-3**) in the background. This view could be seen from Main Street's roadway and sidewalks. From Main Street, views across the project site of

the agricultural land in the Wavecrest area, located west of SR 1, are readily available between the trees.

Viewpoint 2: South of the project site. SR-1 looking north.

Viewpoint 2 exhibits the southern Downtown gateway intersection of SR-1 and Higgins Canyon Road (see **Figure 4.1-3**). The city's gateway signage and landscaping associated with a new traffic signal, is visible at the southern edge of the project site. Trees line the eastern edge of the project site along Main Street. Except for foggy periods, the eastern hillsides make for a notable visual backdrop.

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- Legend**
- 1 Viewpoint 1
 - 2 Viewpoint 2
 - 3 Viewpoint 3
 - 4 Viewpoint 4



Viewpoint Map Figure **4.1-2**

Source: SquareOne, 2019.

Hyatt Place Half Moon Bay Project

Viewpoint 1



Viewpoint 2



Existing Views - Viewpoints 1 and 2

Figure

4.1-3

Source: SquareOne, 2019.

Viewpoint 3: West of the project site. SR-1 looking northeast.

Viewpoint 3 is similar to Viewpoint 2 in that passing cars on SR-1 can see trees bordering the eastern edge of the project site and the hillsides above them (see **Figure 4.1-4**). The James Ford Dealership and residential developments are visible across the project site to the northeast.

Viewpoint 4: West of the project site. Naomi Patridge Trail looking west.

Viewpoint 4 features views from across SR-1 at the Naomi Patridge Trail (see **Figure 4.1-4**). Above the bottlebrush trees that border the eastern edge of the project site, viewers can see the hillsides that separate the coast from inland. Through the tree canopy a viewer can see the Coastal Repertory Theater, Station 40 of the Coast Side Fire Protection District, and several residential developments.

Light and Glare

Sources of daytime glare can either be a direct source of light or an object that reflects light from another source, such as windows. Existing sources of daytime glare in the area surrounding the project site include light reflected from buildings and car windows on and around the project site.

The nighttime ambient lighting in Half Moon Bay is much lower than the more densely populated San Francisco Bay side of San Mateo County due to the nighttime lighting blockage afforded by the Santa Cruz Mountains. Dark night skies are considered a visual asset and community value in Half Moon Bay.

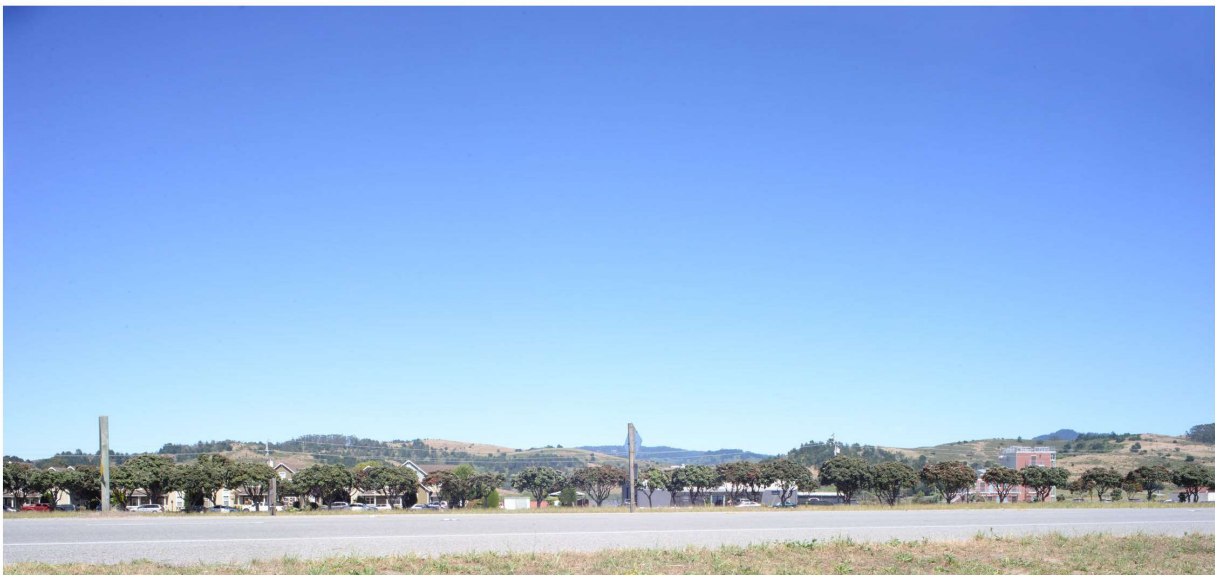
Lighting sources in the project vicinity are typical of a lower density residential area, with exterior residential lighting, cars, and streetlights generating relatively low levels of night lighting. Ambient light is produced by the commercial and residential developments located north and east of the project site, see **Figure 4.1-5**.

Hyatt Place Half Moon Bay Project

Viewpoint 3



Viewpoint 4



Existing Views – Viewpoints 3 and 4

Figure

4.1-4

Source: SquareOne, 2019.

Hyatt Place Half Moon Bay Project

Viewpoint 4 – Existing Nighttime View



Existing Nighttime View – Viewpoint 4

Figure

4.1-5

Source: SquareOne, 2019.

4.1.3 REGULATORY SETTING

State

California Scenic Highway Program

The intent of the California Scenic Highway Program is to protect and enhance California's natural beauty and to protect the social and economic values provided by the state's scenic resources. State scenic highways are officially designated by Scenic Highways Advisory Committee. The program protects against encroachment of incompatible land uses, mitigates and minimizes development activities along scenic corridors, prohibits billboards, and regulates grading activity. Once a scenic highway designation is granted, a wide range of protections apply to the designated corridor, including a prohibition on off-premises advertising displays, colloquially known as billboards.

Project Consistency

Portions of SR-1 are locally designated as a State Scenic Highway due to sections of the highway that traverse the mountainous coast with views of rocky headlands and the Pacific Ocean. SR-92, located north of the project, is eligible to be a State Designated Highway, but has not been officially designated. Primary scenic coastal access routes near the project site include Poplar Street, and Wavecrest Road.

The project site borders SR-1 and would therefore be visible from this corridor. However, the project design would draw upon the existing aesthetic character of Half Moon Bay to reflect and emphasize the visual resources surrounding the project site. Though the portion of SR-1 that runs adjacent isn't officially designated as a scenic corridor, the City has expressed intent to treat the SR-1 corridor as a visual resource area (see the City of Half Moon Bay Zoning Ordinance consistency discussion below for more information). Furthermore, as described later in this section, recent Coastal Commission consideration of the fire tower project east of the project site provided guidance to the City for implementing scenic corridor requirements. Therefore, all regulations and policies regulating scenic corridors and visual resources would apply to the project site. Project design is consistent with these regulations and those under the California Scenic Highway Program.

Local

City of Half Moon Bay Zoning Ordinance

Chapter 18.36 of the Half Moon Bay Zoning Ordinance provides visual resource protection standards in order to:

- A) Protect the scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas as a resource of public importance;
- B) Ensure that new development is located so as to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas;
- C) Minimize the alteration of natural land forms;
- D) Restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas; and
- E) Allow development only when it is visually compatible with the character of the surrounding areas.

Visual resource areas within Half Moon Bay are divided by Scenic Corridors, which are visual resource areas along SR-1 and scenic beach access routes; Upland Slopes, which comprise the scenic hillsides visible from SR-1 and SR-92 as indicated on the Scenic and Visual Resource Areas map (**Figure 4.1-1**); Planned Development Areas, which are designated for new development by the LCLUP; and Old downtown, which is the historic downtown area once known as “Spanish Town.”

Section 18.37.020 of the zoning ordinance defines the “Highway One Corridor;” 18.37.030 provides specific standards for development within the “Highway One Corridor,” and 18.37.050 outlines specific requirements of a landscape plan for developments in Half Moon Bay.

18.37.020 Visual resources areas.

The community development director shall prepare and maintain maps of all designated visual resource areas within the city, based upon the visual resources overlay map contained in the city’s local coastal program land use plan. Visual resource areas within the city are defined as follows:

A. Scenic Corridors. Visual resource areas along the Highway One corridor and scenic beach access routes, defined as follows:

- 1. Highway One Corridor. Located on both sides of Highway One, for a distance of two hundred yards in those areas where Highway One is designated as a scenic highway by the state of California and in those areas shown on the visual resources overlay map in the city’s local coastal program land use plan.*

18.37.030 Scenic corridor standards.

Public views within and from scenic corridors shall be protected and enhanced, according to the following standards:

B. Development within the Highway One corridor and scenic corridors along all designated shoreline access routes as indicated on the visual resources overlay map where existing permits or development does not exist. In general, structures shall be:

- 1. Situated and designed to protect any views of the ocean and scenic coastal areas. Where appropriate and feasible, the site plan shall restore and enhance the scenic quality of visually degraded areas.*
- 2. Located where least visible from the public view. Development shall not block views of the shoreline from scenic road turnouts, rest stops or vista points.*
- 3. Designed to be compatible with the environment, in order to maintain the natural features such as streams, major drainage, mature trees, and dominant vegetative communities.*
- 4. Set back an appropriate distance from the Highway One right-of-way and from scenic beach access routes in accordance with the intent of this chapter.*
- 5. Designed to maintain a low height above natural grade, unless a greater height would not obstruct public views.*

18.37.050 Landscape design standards.

Approval of a landscape plan will be based upon how well the plan addresses environmental and visual conditions specific to the site. Criteria used to evaluate the landscape plans will include the following:

- A. Landscaping shall be an integral part of the project design, to create a pleasing appearance from both within and off the site.*
- B. Landscape plans shall display organization and usefulness of space through arrangement of architectural elements and plantings. Vegetation shall be arranged in a hierarchy of plant groupings to enhance the visual and scenic qualities of the site.*
- C. New or replacement vegetation shall be compatible with surrounding vegetation and shall be adaptable to the site with regard to rainfall, soil type, exposure, growth rate, erosion control and energy conservation purposes. Plant materials chosen shall be species which do not present safety hazards, which allow native flora to reestablish*

in the area, and which require minimal maintenance, including watering, pest control, and clean-up of litter from fruit and leaf droppings.

D. Existing trees shall be preserved wherever possible. Trees which are to be saved should be identified and a note included on the plans as to their protection and pruning.

E. Trees should not be planted directly over or under utility lines. Trees with a surface root system should not be planted in the following areas without a root control box: parking lot medians, parking lot tree wells, parking strips, areas adjacent to other paved surfaces.

F. In general, trees and large shrubs should be planted a minimum of fifteen feet away from any major structure, except for street trees and shrubs in the downtown area. Trees and shrubs which have a height greater than width at maturity may be planted as close as three feet to a structure. Trees should be planted far enough from windows and entry ways to prevent severe pruning or removal of the plant as it matures.

G. Trees should be planted far enough from street lighting to prevent blockage or reduction of light as the tree matures. Trees should be planted far enough from road signs and signals so as not to obstruct visibility. On the corner of a corner lot, shrubs shall be maintained at a height of thirty inches or lower at maturity and trees shall be trimmed and pruned so that they branch at six feet or higher to allow for adequate sight distance.

H. New street trees shall be fifteen gallon can size, at a minimum, at the time of planting. (1996 zoning code (part))

Project Consistency

The project is located within 200 yards of SR-1, and is therefore subject to Section 18.37.020 and 18.37.030 of the Half Moon Bay Zoning Ordinance. As defined by 18.37.020, the stretch of SR-1 adjacent to the project site does not meet the definition of a visual resource area because it has not been designated by the State as a scenic corridor, nor is it shown on the LCLUP Scenic and Visual Resource Areas map (**Figure 4.1-1**). However, consistent with Coastal Commission guidance, the City's "Assessing Visual Resource Policies for Projects within 200 Yards of Highway One" Memo, LCLUP Policy 7-1 (**Table 4.1-1**) clearly presents Half Moon Bay's intent to treat the SR-1 corridor as a visual resource area. Pursuant to Section 18.37.030(B)(5), new developments should address views of the inland hillsides from SR-1 to

evaluate the extent to which development obstructs skyline ridgeline views. Parking included with project design would be substantially screened from motorists on SR-1 by the building massing.

The project as proposed would partially interfere with longer distance views of ridgelines and hillsides due to the height of the buildings and rooflines.

Implementation of the project is consistent with Section 18.37.050 of the Zoning Ordinance, which states that landscape design standards used to evaluate how well the project design addresses the visual conditions specific to a project site. The landscaping plan has been designed to accomplish the following:

- Maintain compatibility with the forthcoming entry feature on the south side of the parcel;
- Maintain the integrity of the wetlands on the west side of the property by establishing a setback buffer which will also enhance views of the site from SR-1; and
- Incorporating vegetation that will soften the appearance of building massing and sight lines.

While the landscaping plans for the project would improve the appearance of the development; overall, the project will interfere with the longer-range views of the hillsides and ridgelines. This aspect of the project is discussed in more detail in **Section 4.1.4, Impacts and Mitigation Measures**.

City of Half Moon Bay Local Coastal Land Use Plan

The LCLUP contains the relevant policies related to visual resources and aesthetics outlined in **Table 4.1-1**. As described in **Section 4.10, Land Use**, the project site is located in an area designated as commercial general, and therefore must comply with the proposed development conditions for the design of the project.

Table 4.1-1 Project Consistency with Relevant General Plan Policies

General Plan Policy Number	General Plan Policy	Project Consistency
<i>LCLUP Chapter 9 Scenic and Visual Resources</i>		
9-2: Scenic Resource Protection	New development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean, to minimize the alteration of natural land form, to be visually compatible with the character of its setting, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.	Consistent. The project site is flat and would not affect natural landforms. The project does not affect views of the ocean. The building design incorporates natural colors and materials to be visually compatible with the SR-1 setting because the site is located near open fields to the south and west, and foothills can be seen to the east.
9-6: Site Planning and Design for New Development	Require new development to be subject to design review to ensure it is sited and designed to protect public views of scenic and visual resource areas and to be visually compatible with the character of the surrounding area. Measures to be considered may include, but are not limited to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Siting development in the least visible portion of the site; b) Breaking up the mass of new structures; c) Designing structures to blend into the surrounding natural landscape; d) Restricting building maximum size and height; e) Clustering or distributing development; f) Incorporating landscape elements and screening; and Conformance with any adopted design guidelines.	Consistent. The project would be subject to design review. The project development is clustered and set back from SR-1 and the intersection of SR-1 at South Main Street to allow for site lines across the substantially undeveloped portion of the site. The project mass is broken up into multiple structures and building design and materials were selected to be visually compatible with agricultural building forms, colors and rough textures. Landscape elements align the two sides of the project to the context of each side of the site. On the west side of the site, landscaping includes wetland restoration and use of native plantings found in nearby Wavecrest; on the east side of the site, landscaping includes street trees and frontage improvements consistent with Main Street.
9-9: Streetscapes	Streetscape improvements, whether they are required as a condition of new development or implemented as a City project, shall be designed and maintained with street trees, vegetation, and landscaping to enhance the visual experience of the streetscape	Consistent. Existing street trees on Main Street would be protected and preserved to maintain a consistent and mature planting. The project design accommodates new gateway improvements installed by the city at the southern corner of the project site.

General Plan Policy Number	General Plan Policy	Project Consistency
	without obstructing scenic views upon maturity.	
9-10: Fences, Walls, and Landscaping	Ensure that fences, walls, and landscaping shall not block public views of or from scenic and visual resource areas including along scenic corridors, at parks and beaches, and other scenic public viewing areas through height restrictions and required landscape maintenance.	Consistent. The project's landscaping would not block public views of scenic and visual resource areas; and specifically, landscaping would not block views of the western hills from SR-1. There are no permanent fences or walls proposed.
9-11: Landscape Screening	Prioritize avoidance of development impacts to scenic and visual resource areas through site planning and design alternatives over landscape screening. Landscape screening as mitigation of visual impacts shall not substitute for project alternatives including re-siting or reducing the height or bulk of structures, but may be used where appropriate to soften any unavoidable visual impacts of new development. Where permitted, landscape screening shall be comprised of native and drought tolerant species and shall be maintained such that scenic views are not blocked at maturity.	Consistent. Project landscaping is utilized in restoration areas and for frontage and parking lot improvements. It is not used to screen the development. Project alternatives with reduced massing and scale are described in Chapter 5.0, Alternatives . The alternatives would reduce impacts to scenic vistas and visual resources.
9-23: Upland Slopes and Ridgelines	Protect broad views of upland slopes, prominent ridgelines and other intervening ridgelines as viewed from scenic corridors and the beach and shoreline through the following means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Prohibiting new development above the 160-foot contour line and on slopes greater than 30 percent, including grading and subdivisions but excluding public trails and critical facilities or public infrastructure that cannot be located elsewhere; 	Inconsistent. The project site is below the 160 foot contour line, and the site design incorporates deep setbacks from SR-1 to minimize visual intrusions into the ridgeline from the SR-1 view. Despite these design considerations, views of the ridgelines are impacted as viewed from northbound SR-1 approaching the project site from the south.

General Plan Policy Number	General Plan Policy	Project Consistency
	<p>b) Ensuring new development below the 160-foot contour line is sited and designed to minimize intrusions into the ridgeline through the application of appropriate height and setback restrictions; and</p> <p>Establishing standards for the Town Boulevard, other streetscapes, and large-scale landscaping projects to highlight and frame, but not block, views of visual resource areas.</p>	
9-30: Dark Night Skies	<p>Protect dark night skies as part of Half Moon Bay’s scenic and visual character by preventing light pollution from development. Avoid impacts from exterior lighting on dark night skies, sensitive habitat areas, and agricultural operations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Limiting exterior lighting to low-intensity fixtures that are shielded, down-cast, and concealed so that the light source is not directly visible from public viewing areas, with the exception of traffic lights, navigational lights, and other similar safety lighting; b. Limiting installation and use of high-intensity perimeter lighting and lighting for sports fields, other private recreational facilities, or public facilities in scenic areas, with the exception of safety lighting provided that any high-intensity lighting is down-cast, shielded, and minimizes spillover; and 	<p>Consistent. Site lighting has been designed in compliance with this policy. A photometrics site plan will be required at the Building Permit stage to ensure compliance with the applicable portions of this policy (part a.).</p>

General Plan Policy Number	General Plan Policy	Project Consistency
	Reducing light pollution from greenhouses as a condition of approval for new development through shielding and other practices that minimize light spillover.	
9-31: Lighting Plan Review	Require submittal of lighting plans with applications for new development, including subdivisions, for review of lighting characteristics.	Consistent. Site lighting has been designed in compliance with this policy. A photometrics site plan will be required at the Building Permit stage.
9-33: Lighting Inspection	Where new lighting associated with residential or commercial developments will face the public right-of-way, Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA), ESHA buffer areas, or agricultural operations, require design review during the construction phase to ensure compliance with any required lighting criteria.	Consistent. Site lighting will be reviewed during the construction phase of the project when the project is developed to ensure compliance with Policies 9-30 and 9-31.
9-34: Signs	Ensure that signs are designed and located to minimize impacts to visual resource areas. Signs approved as part of commercial development shall be incorporated into the design of the project and shall be subject to height, width, and lighting limitations and design standards to ensure that signs are visually compatible with surrounding areas and protect views to and from visual resource areas. Prohibit placement of signs, excluding traffic or public safety signs, which obstruct views to the ocean or beaches from public viewing areas or public roads.	Consistent. Building, monument and directional signage are anticipated with this project. Signage will not impact visual resource areas because it will not block views of such areas, will not obstruct views to the ocean or beaches, the project will conform to the City's Sign Ordinance with respect to size and placement, and will be carefully lit so as to not produce glare or otherwise detract from the character of the project site's setting.

Source: City of Half Moon Bay, 2021.

4.1.4 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Thresholds of Significance

The following thresholds of significance for aesthetic resources were derived from the *Environmental Checklist in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Appendix G*. These thresholds of significance have been amended or supplemented, as appropriate, to address lead agency requirements and the full range of potential impacts related to this project.

An impact of the project would be considered significant and would require mitigation if it would meet one of the following thresholds of significance:

- Aes a)** Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- Aes b)** Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- Aes c)** In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality;
- Aes d)** Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Methodology

To determine potential impacts, the impact significance criteria identified above were applied to construction and operation of the project.

Key viewpoints were selected to be representative of the most critical locations from which the project would be seen. They were selected based on their usefulness in evaluating existing landscapes and potential impacts on protected visual resources pursuant to the Local Coastal Program, which most significantly include views of upland slopes from SR-1. With respect to aesthetics more broadly, views from various vantage points were chosen in consideration of site plan design. These aspects and the bulk and massing of above-grade development are considered in relationship to existing aesthetic conditions and visual impacts. In addition, the elements of visual quality, viewer concerns, visibility, number of viewers, and duration of view are also considered.

A visual simulation analysis was conducted to depict build out of the project. A visual simulation was created for each key viewpoint in addition to one nighttime simulation to depict light and glare generated by the project. An analytical comparison of the existing condition and the proposed condition for the project site was conducted to identify potential visual impacts resulting from implementation of the project.

Discussion of Impacts

Aes a) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

Impact AES-1. The project would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

Significant. As described above, the agricultural lands in the Wavecrest area are visible from the west viewshed of the project site, which provides views of the coastline and ocean from the western side that are not visible from the project site. The view from Main Street across SR-1 to Wavecrest provides a view of an open field, and not the coastal views available from the western side of Wavecrest. Implementation of the project would generally block views of the agricultural land on the eastern side of the Wavecrest area from Main Street (Viewpoint 1) as depicted in **Figure 4.1-6**. However, this impact would not be significant because the view of the agricultural land at Wavecrest is not a protected view or considered a sensitive view or vista. Wavecrest is identified in the LCLUP as providing broad ocean views from some vantage points along SR-1; however, there are no broad ocean views visible from Main Street in the direction of the Wavecrest area.

Buildout of the project also has the potential to impact the long-range views of hillsides and ridgelines to the north and east of the project site (Viewpoints 2, 3 and 4). Views of the hillside from SR-1 and from the Naomi Patridge Trail have the potential to be obscured by the project. As shown in **Figure 4.1-7** through **Figure 4.1-9**, the ridgelines would be visible from Viewpoint 2, but would be interrupted from Viewpoints 3 and 4. The LCLUP identifies the long-range views of the ridgeline as a scenic vista, and therefore Viewpoint 3 represents a protected view according to LCLUP policy. Viewpoint 4 represents a viewpoint of public interest.

Given the above, implementation of the project would not have a substantial adverse effect on broad ocean views over the Wavecrest area. However, the project would interfere with the protected long-range scenic views of the ridgelines north and east of the project site from SR-1 (Viewpoint 3). The project site is below the 160-foot contour line identified in LCLUP Policy 9-23, and the site design incorporates deep setbacks from SR-1 to minimize visual

intrusions into the ridgeline from the SR-1 view. Additionally, the project design also includes design elements that minimize massing of the proposed 2- to 3-story high buildings, such as incorporating the third story of the lodging buildings within a dormer roof form and by stepping the height down toward the southern gateway corner. Despite these design considerations, views of the ridgelines are obstructed as viewed from northbound SR-1 approaching the project site from the south. Therefore, there are no other feasible measures, that would reduce the impact to the scenic vistas given the mass and scale of the project, and this impact is considered significant and unavoidable.

Aes b) Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

Impact AES-2. The project would substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.

Significant. As discussed above, the project site is located adjacent to SR-1. Although this section of SR-1 is not officially designated as a scenic highway, Half Moon Bay considers it to be a visual area and scenic corridor subject to LCLUP policy applicable to a scenic corridor. The project site is an undeveloped open area with bottlebrush trees lining the eastern border along Main Street and one Monterey cypress tree at the northwest end of the project site. The ridgeline (scenic vista) in the backdrop is considered a scenic resource as seen from SR-1.

Implementation of the project, as shown in **Figure 4.1-8**, would predominately alter the view of this scenic resource from Viewpoint 3, which shows the project site from SR-1. The project would include design measures to minimize the impact of the proposed structures including appropriate setbacks from SR-1 to minimize visual intrusions into the ridgeline from the SR-1 view. In addition, the project has provided a sizable buffer of at least 100 feet, between SR-1 and the proposed structures to avoid impacts to wetlands. This setback also provides a reduction to some of the visual encroachment into views from SR-1. The project design also includes design elements that minimize massing of the proposed 2-3 story high buildings, such as incorporating the third story of the lodging buildings within a dormer roof form and by stepping the height down toward the southern gateway corner. Four bottlebrush trees along the eastern side of the project site along Main Street would be removed. However, the Monterey cypress tree on the north side of the site would be preserved. Trees would be planted to replace the ones removed as a result of project implementation. Landscaping and

trees proposed as part of the project would contribute to the scenic resources visible from SR-1.

Notwithstanding the project design treatments discussed above, project implementation would still obstruct the long-range views of the ridgeline (scenic resource) as viewed from northbound SR-1 approaching the project site from the south. There are no other feasible measures available to address this impact, similar to **Impact AES-1**, as there is no measure that would reduce the impacts to this scenic resource given the mass and scale of the project. Therefore, this impact would be considered significant and unavoidable.

Hyatt Place Half Moon Bay Project

Existing View



View With Project



Visual Simulation – Viewpoint 1

Figure

4.1-6

Source: SquareOne, 2019.

Hyatt Place Half Moon Bay Project

Existing View



View With Project



View With Project and South Gateway



Visual Simulation – Viewpoint 2

Figure

4.1-7

Source: SquareOne, 2019.

Hyatt Place Half Moon Bay Project

Existing View



View With Project



Visual Simulation – Viewpoint 3

Figure

4.1-8

Source: SquareOne, 2019.

Hyatt Place Half Moon Bay Project

Existing View



View With Project



Visual Simulation – Viewpoint 4

Figure

4.1-9

Source: SquareOne, 2019 and FastCast, 2020.

Aes c) Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

Visibility of the project site is high given that public views are available from almost any direction and are only impeded from the north by the James Ford Auto dealership. As shown in **Figure 4.1-6** through **Figure 4.1-9**, the project site and its general surroundings are relatively undeveloped and contribute to the open space in southern Half Moon Bay. Public viewers generally include motorists traveling along SR-1 and Main Street, daytime recreationalists along the Naomi Patridge Trail to the west, and residents or visitors from the residential homes and commercial building east of the project site. The Wavecrest area west of the project side is characterized by land in agricultural use. In addition, the southern end of the project site includes a new monument sign and landscaping as part of a signalization project to identify the southern entrance to Main Street and the City from SR-1, which is shown in **Figure 4.1-7**. The monument sign and accompanying landscaping would create a foreground and visual transition to views of the proposed hotel structures from northbound SR-1.

Construction

Less than Significant. Construction activities would temporarily degrade the existing visual quality of the site and its surroundings from publicly accessible viewpoints. Because there are no existing structures located on the project site, no demolition would be necessary to begin construction of the project. However, site-wide preparations such as clearing, grubbing, earthworks, utility installation, and street paving would interrupt the existing visual quality of the project site. In addition, temporary structures, material storage areas, and debris piles could be located within the project site during various stages of demolition and construction. Tree removal throughout the project site during the initial construction phase would transform the visual quality of public views of the portions of the project site proposed for development. The existing Monterey cypress tree would be preserved, along with most of the bottlebrush trees. Based on preliminary plans, it's estimated that four bottlebrush trees would be removed to allow for new vehicular access to the site. Consistent with the project's landscape plan and tree replacement strategy, six strawberry trees and 10 New Zealand Christmas trees would be added along the Main Street entrance of the site during the construction phase. A mix of ornamental grass and shrubs would also be added as landscaping throughout the site.

For the purposes of this draft EIR, project construction is assumed to occur over an 18-month period. Construction activities including site preparation, grading and excavation, and utility trenching, would occur over 35 days. Construction of the building exterior and interior are estimated to take 335 and 175 days respectively. Finally, paving would occur over approximately 20 days.

Given the temporary nature of construction activities, project construction would not substantially degrade the area's existing visual character nor would it interfere with quality of public views of the project site.

Impact AES-3. The project would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings.

Operation

Significant. Project design was developed with the intention of reflecting the visual character and visual quality of the project site's surroundings as well as maintaining the quality of public views to preserve the heritage and character of the city. Buildout of the project would result in permanent changes to the existing visual quality of public views to the project site. Each viewpoint discussed below identifies public views of the project site and its surroundings that have the potential to be impacted by the project.

Viewpoint 1

Viewpoint 1 represents public view from across Main Street at the residential developments located northeast of the project site. As shown in **Figure 4.1-6**, the hotel would be visible through the existing bottlebrush trees which border the project site's eastern perimeter. The building would nearly eliminate public views of the agricultural lands in the Wavecrest area from Main Street. Based on preliminary plans, it's estimated that four bottlebrush trees would be removed along Main Street to allow for new vehicular access to the site. Six strawberry trees and ten New Zealand Christmas trees would be added along the Main Street entrance of the site, consistent with the project's landscape plan and tree replacement strategy.

Viewpoint 2

Viewpoint 2 shows the project site from SR-1, south of Higgins Canyon Road. **Figure 4.1-7** depicts the project site as it would appear during the operation phase. Consistent with zoning at the project site, the project site would be set back from SR-1 and would preserve the open space at the southern end of the site of the City's southern gateway to Downtown. As shown in **Figure 4.1-7**, the existing "Half Moon" sculpture has been replaced with new signage

and landscaping as part of the recently constructed signalization project. Also depicted is the filtered public views of the ridgeline visible above the hotel and the trees that would be preserved with project implementation.

Viewpoint 3

Viewpoint 3 shows the project site from SR-1, south of Higgins Canyon Road. **Figure 4.1-8** depicts the project site as it would appear during the operation phase. Viewpoint 3 represents the public view while traveling on SR-1. As shown in **Figure 4.1-8**, the building massing and rooflines substantially interfere with the long-range view of the hillsides and ridgelines available from SR-1.

Viewpoint 4

Viewpoint 4 shows the project site from the bicycle path across SR-1, facing east towards the project site. The wetlands along SR-1 would be preserved and restored with adherence to LCLUP policy and native plantings would be included as part the landscape plan. Implementation of the project's landscape plan would enhance the scenic quality of the project site, consistent with Section 18.37.050 of the Half Moon Bay Zoning Ordinance. However, as shown in **Figure 4.1-9**, the building massing and rooflines substantially interfere with the public long-range view of the hillsides and ridgelines available from the Naomi Patridge Trail.

As described above, implementation of the project would substantially degrade the quality of public views of the project site and the surrounding area, specifically the long-range views of the ridgelines available from Viewpoints 3 and 4; while the change in visual character of the adjacent neighborhood is reflected in Viewpoint 1. Changes to the project site would be consistent with the developed nature of Downtown, although the buildings are significantly larger and present longer facades than existing development patterns throughout Downtown and in the immediate neighborhood. To address this, the project would incorporate high quality design elements, landscaping, and screening techniques. However, the visual quality of the project site as seen from public viewpoints is conservatively considered to be adversely affected by the project. The findings above are based on special circumstances related to both the site, including its location, shape, visibility, and gateway location; and the proposed development, including its relatively long facades and larger building forms than typically found in the city.

While screening techniques could be included in the project, they would not address interruption of long-range public views and changes of the visual quality of the site and surrounding areas from the permanent change

associated with this scale of development. Therefore, this impact is conservatively found to be significant and unavoidable.

Aes d) *Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?*

Impact AES-4. The project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Construction

Less Than Significant with Standard Condition. During construction, temporary lighting may be needed in work areas and staging areas during evening hours, particularly if construction activities take place during the winter months when there are fewer hours of daylight (especially after daylight savings time ends) during the allowable construction hours until 6:00 p.m. as regulated by the noise ordinance. At the time of the winter solstice, the sun sets at approximately 4:30 p.m. in Half Moon Bay creating hours of darkness for about 3 months before 6:00 p.m. Construction lighting is often quite bright in comparison to other exterior lighting. This impact has the potential to result in a new, temporary source of light and glare which could affect surrounding users such as drivers on adjacent roadways and residences viewing the site across Main Street. The following standard condition would reduce impacts associated with construction-period light pollution and glare.

Standard Condition AES-1: Appropriate light and glare screening measures, including the use of downward cast lighting, shall be used in construction, staging, and laydown areas. In addition, winter construction times where lighting would be required, shall cease at 5:00 pm from November 1 through January 31 and nighttime construction shall be prohibited.

Significance with Standard Condition. With implementation of the required **Standard Condition AES-1**, this impact during construction would remain less than significant.

Operation

Less Than Significant with Mitigation. The project would add a hotel with 129 guest rooms to a predominately vacant site adjacent to SR-1, single family homes, and commercial buildings. Daytime glare would occur when sunlight reflects off rooftops, windows, and other surfaces of the proposed structures. Nighttime light would be produced from interior room lighting, exterior lights and vehicles traveling to, from, and within the project site. Therefore, the project may increase the amount of daytime glare and nighttime light in the vicinity.

Although the project has high visibility at public viewpoints, mature bottlebrush trees that line the project site's eastern perimeter would partially obstruct light and glare introduced at the site from residences and commercial businesses. With respect to daytime glare, the proposed glazing has a low reflectivity rating. Isolated, temporary glare may also occur from on-site vehicles and parked vehicles, but such glare would be transient, depending upon the time of day and location of the vehicle.

With respect to new sources of automobile lights, the project would not substantially contribute to trip generation in the surrounding project area, as established in **Section 4.15, Transportation and Traffic**. Light from headlights would represent a minor contribution to existing nighttime lighting in the surrounding area and would be consistent with existing light sources on SR-1 and Main Street. However, based on the character of the existing site (an open, unlit field) coupled with the general darkness of the southern end of the City, the presence of illuminated rooms and other hotel features including exterior pathway lighting and parking lot lights, the project would introduce a significant new source of nighttime glare. This can be seen in the comparison shown in **Figure 4.1-10**.

Hyatt Place Half Moon Bay Project

Existing Nighttime View



Nighttime View With Project



Nighttime Visual Simulation – Viewpoint 4

Figure

4.1-10

Source: FastCast, 2020.

Development of a hotel in a currently undeveloped area would increase lighting above existing levels. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure AES-2** would minimize this impact.

Mitigation Measure AES-2: A lighting plan for any proposed exterior lighting must be submitted to the City of Half Moon Bay for review and approval.

Exterior lighting must be directed downward and away from adjacent properties and public/private right-of-way to prevent glare or excessive light spillover. Lighting bulbs must be limited to low intensity lights, including lighting for identification purposes. Landscaping lights must be limited to ground-level for walking/safety purposes.

Significance after Mitigation. Mitigation Measure AES-2 would reduce lighting impacts associated with the operation of the project to a less-than-significant level.

4.1.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The recent, current, and foreseeable future projects listed in outlined in **Chapter 4.0, Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures** could cumulatively impact the Half Moon Bay's scenic quality in the following ways:

- Loss of visual resources within a state scenic highway
- Loss of scenic vistas, such as hillsides, open space, and coastal viewsheds
- Inconsistency with Half Moon Bay's visual character
- Degradation of the visual quality of public views of the site and its surroundings

As discussed in this section, project design is consistent with requirements of developments within 200 yards of a scenic highway. Consideration was given to building massing, materials, site planning, and setbacks to avoid and minimize adverse impacts when viewed from public areas. This includes minimizing effects on hillside and ridgeline views, scenic corridors and surrounding areas. As a result, the project would cumulatively contribute to the degradation of established viewsheds, or other scenic vistas especially the long range views of hillsides and ridgelines in Half Moon Bay. The project, along with several of the recent, current, and foreseeable future projects, are located on land designated for planned development.

Development on these parcels is consistent with the build out of the general plan. The project is located in a developed area, bounded by SR-1 and Main

Street. Benefits of the project include proximity to other major commercial developments and the downtown district. Some architectural elements of the structures (e.g., the wood-like cladding, barn-form roofs, and the “greenhouse” approach to the swimming pool/ness building) aim to reflect historic Half Moon Bay. The proposed project also incorporates extensive open space, providing a buffer and transition zone between less intensive land uses and densely developed commercial districts.

Project design was developed with the intention of reflecting components of the visual character and visual quality of the project site’s surroundings in order to preserve the heritage and character of the city. The majority of existing visual resources would not be affected by project implementation. Resources such as trees and landscaping would be replaced and enhanced upon project completion.

Notwithstanding the design and setbacks required of the project, it would still contribute to a cumulative impact on aesthetics and visual resources due to the permanence of the site aesthetics and the obstruction of hillsides and ridgelines from SR-1.

4.1.6 REFERENCES

City of Half Moon Bay, Community Development Department, 2019.

Assessing Visual Resource Policies for Projects within 200 Yards of Highway One Memorandum.

Dyett & Bhatia, City of Half Moon Bay, 2014. Existing Conditions, Trends, and Opportunities Assessment. Available: <https://www.half-moon-bay.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/174/HMB-Existing-Conditions-Report-PDF>. Accessed: January 2022