5.1 AESTHETICS

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) describes the existing landform and aesthetic character of the Project Site and surrounding area. The potential aesthetic and visual impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed Section 31 Specific Plan ("Section 31 Specific Plan" or "Project") are addressed in this section. The information presented in this section is based on field reconnaissance, review of the proposed Section 31 Specific Plan and other planning documents, and photographs of the Project Site and the surrounding land uses.

Prior to the preparation of this Draft EIR, an Initial Study (included in **Appendix A** of this Draft EIR) was prepared using the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Appendix G Environmental Checklist Form to assess potential environmental impacts associated with aesthetics. The following Initial Study screening criterion related to aesthetics does not require additional analysis in this Draft EIR:

- Potential impacts related to damage of scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway were evaluated and determined to be "Less than Significant" in the Initial Study. The Project Site is not within the vicinity of a designated state scenic highway; the nearest such highway is US Route 64, approximately 16 miles to the northwest. Additionally, the Project Site is vacant with minimal vegetation and low-lying geological conditions and does not contain scenic resources on-site. Therefore, the impact on scenic resources from the Project would be less than significant.

Impacts found to be less than significant are further discussed in **Section 8.1: Effects Not Found to be Significant** of this Draft EIR. Please see **Section 9.0** for a glossary of terms, definitions, and acronyms used in this Draft EIR.

A. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

1. Fundamentals of Aesthetics

A scenic vista refers to views of focal points or panoramic views of broader geographic areas that have visual interest. A focal point view would consist of a view of a notable object, building, or setting. Diminishment of a scenic vista would occur if the bulk or design of a building or development were to contrast enough with a visually interesting view such that the quality of the view is permanently affected.

Size, number, and type of visual obstacles, both natural and man-made, and distance and viewing angle affect available views into and through a site. These views can be from stationary sources, such as homes or businesses, or from mobile sources, such as motor vehicles. The visibility of an object largely depends on the distance from the observer. The farther the structure is from the viewer, the less distinct the structure becomes, and there is a greater possibility of intervening objects blocking some or all of the view

of that structure. With distance, more objects enter into the viewing panorama, and the area becomes more visually "lost."

2. Existing Conditions

Visual Setting

Regional

The Project Site is located in the Western Coachella Valley area which is a predominantly desert and mountainous region with a variety of contrasting and dramatic geographic features. The Coachella Valley contains a series of low-lying desert flatlands, sloping dunes and rolling foothills that are ringed by the San Jacinto, Santa Rosa, and Little San Bernardino Mountains.

The rugged and dramatic topography of the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains to the west and south, respectively, are the predominant natural and visual resource in the Western Coachella Valley. These mountains provide a natural scenic backdrop to the City of Rancho Mirage (City) as well as the rest of the Western Coachella Valley. The Little San Bernardino Mountains to the north and east are also prominent landforms in the general region with elevations reaching over 5,000 feet. Preserving views of these visual resources will continue to be important in creating and maintaining a sense of community and identity.

Project Site

The elevation of the Project Site ranges from approximately 319 feet above mean sea level (asml) at the highest elevation in the northeast corner of the Project Site to 254 feet at the lowest elevation at the southwestern corner of the Project Site. **Figure 5.1-1a: Project Site Photographs** shows the Project Site from the northeastern and southeastern corners. The Project Site generally meets the elevation of the four streets that border the Project Site; Monterey Avenue to the east, Frank Sinatra Drive to the south, Bob Hope Drive to the west, and Gerald Ford Drive to the north. However, as shown in **Figure 5.1-1b: Project Site Photographs**, the southwestern corner of the Project Site near the intersection of Bob Hope Drive and Frank Sinatra Drive is elevated above the street level. This elevation change begins approximately 950 feet north of this intersection along Bob Hope Drive and approximately 2,300 feet east of this intersection along Frank Sinatra Drive.

The Project Site is characterized by wind-blown sand dune or hummock topography extending in a northwest to southeast direction across the site. These partially stabilized sand deposits are present on much of the Project Site and are affected by shrubs and wind patterns. Two small engineered earthen basins are located on the northern boundary of the Project Site along Gerald Ford Drive, and four stormwater inlets via curb cuts on the eastern boundary along Monterey Avenue.

Monterey Avenue and Gerald Ford Drive intersection looking southwest across Project Site

Monterey Avenue and Frank Sinatra Drive intersection looking northwest across Project Site

SOURCE: Google Earth - 2019

FIGURE **5.1-1a**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Project Site Photographs

204-001-018

Bob Hope Drive and Frank Sinatra Drive intersection looking northeast across Project Site

Bob Hope Drive and Gerald Ford Drive intersection looking southeast across Project Site

SOURCE: Google Earth - 2019

FIGURE **5.1-1b**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Project Site Photographs

204-001-018

The vegetation of the Project Site is dominated by the Sonoran creosote bush scrub community that is commonly found throughout the broader region. There are no naturally occurring springs or permanent aquatic habitats within the Project Site boundaries.

Native vegetation has been impacted or disturbed in some portions of the Project Site. Areas around the eastern and western margins of the Project Site contain disturbances consistent with the installation of utility lines and the two small retention basins on the northern side of the Project Site are byproducts of past disturbance. The disturbed areas on the site margins contain minor deposits of artificial fill soils derived from on-site native sands and imported aggregate base used to grade the roadways bounding the site during construction and maintenance. Thicknesses of existing fill are estimated to be less than 2 feet. In addition, there are isolated areas of grading and moderately- and lightly-used two-track roads present throughout the Project Site. Much of these disturbed areas and beyond contain the non-native and invasive Sahara mustard (*Brassica tournefortii*). The establishment of this non-native, ephemeral species has likely contributed to the partial stabilization of sand hummocks on the Project Site.

Surrounding Land Uses

North: As shown in **Figure 5.1-2a: Surrounding Land Uses to the North**, single-family residential neighborhoods are the predominant land use north of Gerald Ford Drive, the northern site boundary. The northern side of Gerald Ford Drive includes a sidewalk and parkway with landscaping dominated by plants, rock features, and ornamental trees, similar to the roadway median. Behind the sidewalk and landscaping is an approximately 5-foot-high wall that screens noise and views into the residential developments from the street view. The rooftops of one-story, single-family residences are visible from Gerald Ford Drive to the north, as well as views of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains looking west and south. Additionally, limited views of the Little San Bernardino Mountains to the north are available from this portion of Gerald Ford Drive. There are several vacant, undeveloped properties interspersed with the development at the corners of Gerald Ford Drive and Bob Hope Drive and Gerald Ford Drive and Oasis Way, with single-family development in between.

East: Directly east of the Project Site across Monterey Avenue in the City of Palm Desert is the Marriott Shadow Ridge Resort, which includes a golf course and multistory, multifamily resort housing. **Figure 5.1-2b: Surrounding Land Uses to the East**, shows both the entrance to this development at Shadow Ridge Road and the multistory buildings associated with it along Monterey Avenue near Frank Sinatra Drive. Monterey Avenue is lined by a sidewalk on its eastern side with adjacent landscaping dominated by plants, rock features, and ornamental trees, similar to the roadway median. Behind the sidewalk and landscaping is an approximately 5-foot-high split wall/fence and trees that screen views into the Shadow Ridge Resort from the street view. The rooftops and some façades of the resort's multistory buildings are visible from

the street. The resort buildings are constructed in desert earth tones, with high archways and mission tile roofs. In addition, immediately east of the Project Site at its southeastern corner lies a vacant, undeveloped parcel within the City of Rancho Mirage. The Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains are visible from Monterey Avenue looking south and the Little San Bernardino Mountains looking north.

South: **Figure 5.1-2c: Surrounding Land Uses to the South**, shows typical development within the areas south of Frank Sinatra Drive. To the south are primarily one story, single-family residences with minor areas of office development to the southeast near Monterey Avenue. Additionally, the Rancho Mirage Country Club borders Frank Sinatra Drive to the southwest near Bob Hope Drive. A 60-unit hotel with ancillary uses and 108 condo units was entitled on the Rancho Mirage Country Club property in 2019. Several vacant, undeveloped properties are interspersed with development to the south. These properties are located at the southwestern corner of Monterey Avenue and Frank Sinatra Drive and in between Vista Dunes and Vista Del Sol, with single-family residential development intermixed. Frank Sinatra Drive is lined by a sidewalk and parkway on its southern side with landscaping dominated by plants, rock features, and ornamental trees, similar to the roadway median. Behind the sidewalk and landscaping is an approximately 5-foot-high wall and trees that screen noise and views into the developments from the street view. Inside these walls are one-story, single-family residences whose rooftops can be viewed from Frank Sinatra Drive. Similar to the east–west traveling Gerald Ford Drive, views of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains are visible from Frank Sinatra Drive looking west and southwest and of the Little San Bernardino Mountains to the north.

West: To the west of Bob Hope Drive is the Annenberg Estate, private 9-hole golf course, and Sunnylands Center and Gardens (Sunnylands), and various administrative and maintenance buildings that support Sunnylands, as well as vacant lands and a commercial shopping center, as shown in **Figure 5.1-2d: Surrounding Lands Uses to the West**. This segment of Bob Hope Drive only includes a sidewalk adjacent to the commercial shopping center at that roadway's intersection with Gerald Ford Drive. The majority of the western side of Bob Hope Drive consists of rock features, plants, and ornamental trees, similar to the roadway median. Behind the landscaping adjacent to Sunnylands is an approximately 5-foot-high-wall that screens noise and views into the visitor center, estate, and golf course from the street view. In addition, a large area of vacant, undeveloped land is located to the north of Sunnylands. Further north of this area is the Rancho Mirage Marketplace, a one-story commercial shopping center that includes a grocery store, financial and medical services, restaurants, a gas station, and other services and surface parking lots. The buildings within the retail center are architecturally designed to match existing buildings in the City, with arching colonnade entry designs, mission tiled roofs, and desert color palette. Similar to north–south traveling Monterey Avenue, views of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains are visible from Bob Hope Drive looking south and the Little San Bernardino Mountains looking north and northeast.

Single-family residences and vacant lands along Gerald Ford Drive near Bob Hope Drive

Single-family residences along Gerald Ford Drive near Monterey Avenue

SOURCE: Google Earth - 2019

FIGURE **5.1-2a**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Surrounding Land Uses to the North

204-001-018

Entrance to Marriot's Shadow Ridge Resort and Golf Course at Monterey Avenue and Shadow Ridge Road

Marriot's Shadow Ridge Resort and Golf Course east of Monterey Avenue

SOURCE: Google Earth - 2019

FIGURE **5.1-2b**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Surrounding Land Uses to the East

204-001-018

Commercial and single-family residential developments at Frank Sinatra Drive and Vista Dunes

Country club development at Frank Sinatra Drive and Kavenish Road

SOURCE: Google Earth - 2019

FIGURE **5.1-2c**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Surrounding Land Uses to the South

204-001-018

Entrance to Sunnylands along Bob Hope Drive

Commercial shopping center and vacant lands along Bob Hope Drive near Gerald Ford Drive

SOURCE: Google Earth - 2019

FIGURE **5.1-2d**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Surrounding Land Uses to the West

204-001-018

Light and Glare

No sources of light or glare exist within the Project Site. The only light sources in the area consist of street lights surrounding the Project Site, including those along Monterey Avenue and Gerald Ford Drive, Monterey Avenue and Shadow Ridge Road, Monterey Avenue and Frank Sinatra Drive, Frank Sinatra Drive and Bob Hope Drive, Bob Hope Drive and Gerald Ford Drive, and Gerald Ford Drive and Versailles Drive. Landscaping within the medians and parkways on roadways surrounding the Project Site are also lit at night. Additionally, there is minimal light from the existing uses east of the Project Site across Monterey Avenue, south across Frank Sinatra Drive, west across Bob Hope Drive, and north across Gerald Ford Drive. Another source of nighttime light in the area includes vehicular traffic along surrounding roadways.

3. Regulatory Setting

State

Caltrans Scenic Highway Program

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) establishes that it is the policy of the State to take all action necessary to provide the people of the State "with…enjoyment of aesthetic, natural, scenic and historic environmental qualities."[1]

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Scenic Highway Program was created to preserve, protect, and enhance the natural scenic beauty of designated scenic highway corridors from change, which would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways, accomplished through special conservation treatment. Caltrans defines a scenic highway as any freeway, highway, road, or other public right-of-way that transverses an area of exceptional scenic quality. Caltrans designates a scenic highway by evaluating how much of the natural landscape a traveler sees and the extent to which visual intrusions degrade the scenic corridor. The State laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Section 260-284.[2] No officially designated scenic highways are located within the City; however, California State Route 111, which runs for approximately four miles through the City, is an Eligible State Scenic Highway.[3]

1 California Public Resources Code, sec. 21001(b).
2 California Streets and Highways Code, sec. 260–284.
3 California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), California Scenic Highway Mapping System, Riverside County, http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_livability/scenic_highways/, accessed May 25, 2018.

Regional and Local

City of Rancho Mirage General Plan

The City updated and adopted the General Plan on November 16, 2017 (Resolution No. 2017-44).[4] The General Plan provides guidance to City decision makers on allocating resources and determining the future physical form and character of development. The General Plan includes the following chapters: Land Use; Circulation; Housing; Conservation and Open Space; Air Quality; Noise; Safety; Public Services and Facilities; Community Design; Economic and Fiscal; and Arts and Culture. The Chapter 2, Land Use establishes standards for residential development and nonresidential building intensity for land located throughout the City. The Land Use Chapter includes a policy to ensure that architecture and site design are high quality, creative, complementary to Rancho Mirage's character, and compatible with surrounding development and public spaces. The Land Use Chapter also identifies a policy to ensure that lots and buildings appropriately interact with, and address, public streets. The Project Site is currently designated by the General Plan as Very Low Density (R-L-2; two dwelling units per acre [du/acre] max) and Resort Hotel (Rs-H) uses (please refer to **Section 5.10: Land Use and Planning**, for a full discussion of the Project's consistency with the General Plan); furthermore, the Project Site currently has a specific plan overlay imposed on it, so a specific plan is required as a precursor to any development. Additionally, Chapter 10: Community Design of the City's General Plan defines the City's most important design goals and guides new development that enhances Rancho Mirage's identity and distinguishes the City from its neighbors. The Community Design Chapter sets out the goals, policies, and actions designed to improve the image, character, and quality of life in the City, and both provides policy direction and serves as a practical reference for property owners, designers, decision-makers, and developers as they develop plans and review design proposals. Design principles discussed therein touch on preserving and enhancing the City's sense of place through the following:

- seeking to incorporate nature through landscaping, views, and building materials in a sustainable manner;
- siting and designing gateways and roadways to provide a sense of arrival;
- providing people-friendly public places for both comfort and interest;
- reflecting the City's setting with authentic architectural quality, materials, and relationships between the built environment; and
- ensuring visual continuity and design transitions with landscaping and architecturally designed walls.

4 City of Rancho Mirage, General Plan (November 2017).

Rancho Mirage Municipal Code

The City's Municipal Code identifies land use categories, development standards, and other general provisions that ensure consistency between the City's General Plan and proposed development projects. The City's Municipal Code includes provisions that help minimize light and glare impacts associated with new development projects. Provisions that are relevant to the Project are as follows:

- Title 17 (Zoning), Chapter 17.18 (General Performance Standards), Section 17.18.050 (Exterior Glare, Heat, and Light)
- Title 17 (Zoning), Chapter 17.18 (General Performance Standards), Section 17.18.090 (View protection)
- Title 17 (Zoning), Division III (Development and Operation Standards), Chapter 17.26 (Parking and Loading Standards), Section 17.26.070 (Development Standards), G (Lighting)

B. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. Thresholds of Significance

In order to assist in determining whether a project would have a significant effect on the environment, the City finds a project may be deemed to have a significant aesthetic impact if, except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, the project would:

Threshold 5.1-1: **Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.**

Threshold 5.1-2: **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?**

Threshold 5.1-3: **Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.**

2. Methodology

The analysis identifies and objectively examines factors that contribute to the perception of the aesthetic and visual character of the Project Site and the surrounding area. Potential aesthetic impacts are evaluated by considering proposed grading, landform alteration, building setbacks, scale, massing, typical construction materials, and landscaping features associated with the design of the Project. Edge conditions and view alterations are considered in the context of the above factors. The aesthetic

compatibility of the Project with the surrounding area and potential impacts to visual resources and viewers in the Project Site are examined.

3. Project Design Features

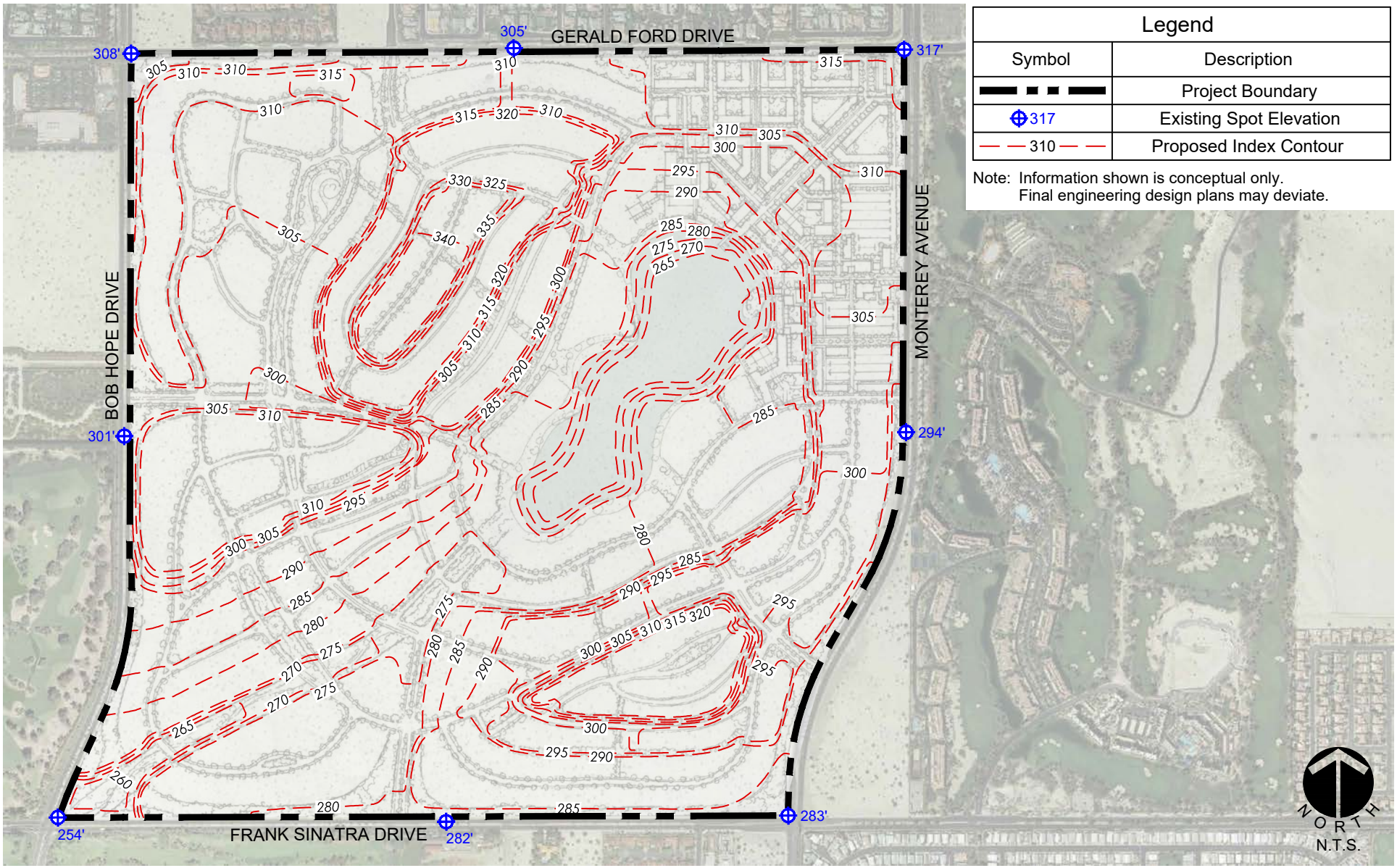
As described in **Section 3.0: Project Description** of this Draft EIR, the Project includes development of an infill site with a mixed-use, master planned community consisting of a combination of resort hotel uses, a complimentary mixed-use Town Center, and a variety of residential neighborhoods, all surrounding a 34-acre Grand Oasis lagoon. As also described therein and discussed in greater detail in **Section 5.10: Land Use and Planning** of this Draft EIR, the Section 31 Specific Plan would establish the plans, land use regulations, development standards, design guidelines, infrastructure requirements, and implementation programs to guide the development of a mixed-use, master-planned community on the Project Site. The following building and development standards proposed by the Section 31 Specific Plan are identified below pertaining to aesthetics/visual quality and views.

Grading

Elevations across the existing Project Site range from approximately 319 feet above mean sea level (amsl) at the northeast corner to approximately 254 feet amsl at the southwest corner with the highest points running diagonally through the center of the Project Site. Overall, the site contains a slope of approximately 0.8 percent.

The Section 31 Specific Plan includes a Conceptual Grading Plan, subject to final engineering plans and field conditions, that demonstrates the contours after mass grading, as shown in **Figure 5.1-3: Conceptual Grading Plan**. Site grading will reconfigure the ground surface to create level and terraced areas designed for development of residential lots, the Grand Oasis lagoon, and streets with vehicle-appropriate gates.

The Project aims to takes advantage of changes in elevation presented by the existing topography of Section 31 to maximize both internal views from the Town Center and residential lots and existing views from surrounding roadways and properties of the regional mountain ranges to the north, south, and west of the Project Site. The grading plan proposes to create two elevated mounds that accommodate terraced homes sites within the Project, one in the northwest quadrant (Planning Area 1) with an approximate elevation of 340 feet and a second in the southeast quadrant (Planning Area 3) with an elevation of approximately 320 feet. The Grand Oasis lagoon is sited between these and forms the northerly end of a southwest trending open space corridor. The lagoon and corridor exhibit the lowest elevations within the Project at a water surface elevation of 275 feet to a graded ground elevation of 260 feet at the southwest corner of the Project Site.



Legend	
Symbol	Description
	Project Boundary
317	Existing Spot Elevation
310	Proposed Index Contour

Note: Information shown is conceptual only.
Final engineering design plans may deviate.

SOURCE: Hart Howerton - 2019, MSA Consulting Inc. - 2019

FIGURE **5.1-3**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Conceptual Grading Plan

204-001-018

As described in *Chapter 5.1, B.4: Project Impact*s of this section below, photographic visual simulations were developed to provide representative illustrations of the buildings and site improvements the Specific Plan would permit. These simulations demonstrate that the topographical features of the Project would maintain views across the site to the greatest extent feasible. These simulations demonstrate that the topographical features of the Project would substantially maintain views across the Project Site, and would only block views of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto mountains from limited areas adjacent to the Town Center and resort hotels (Views A and B).

The Specific Plan incorporates a grading approach designed to protect the Grand Oasis lagoon from surface water intrusion and, therefore, will not be available for retention use. Grading for the Project Site will direct drainage around the Grand Oasis lagoon and will provide retention in dispersed locations throughout the Project Site. The drainage pattern for the Project would flow to the southern boundary where retention facilities are planned. Grading also is designed to achieve positive surface flows and protect all structures and physical improvements from a 100-year storm, surface runoff, soil erosion, and sedimentation both during and after construction, as well as to prevent any adverse impacts from surface flows on nearby properties. As discussed in **Section 5.9: Hydrology and Water Quality**, the Grand Oasis lagoon would have the potential to accept some direct rainwater; however, it would not function as a retention area during storm events. Stormwater retention facilities planned throughout the Project Site are designed to accept flows via topographical features and have sufficient storage to retain the flood volume from a 100-year storm event, thus meeting the hydrologic requirement established by the City. New development would be required to adequately retain and convey stormwater runoff such that flooding does not occur. In addition, the grading design balances on-site earthwork (cut and fill), taking into account excavation generated by site grading and grades needed to achieve minimum cover for underground gravity sewer. Grading activities will comply with regulations established by the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) to control sediment discharge during construction.

Building Design

Building Heights

Development standards in the Specific Plan would control building heights for proposed residential, mixed-use, resort, service, entertainment, and lagoon uses. Building height shall be measured from the approved building pad elevation for an individual project site. In the case of a stepped building, it is anticipated that multiple approved building pad elevations would need to be demonstrated in order to measure building height. The Specific Plan goes into more detail regarding the height requirements for each pertaining land use, and would orient the proposed 1,932 dwelling units such that buildings with lower densities are located near the exterior boundaries of the Project Site, increasing gradually in density toward the Grand Oasis lagoon and the Town Center Planning Area (Town Center). Within the residential

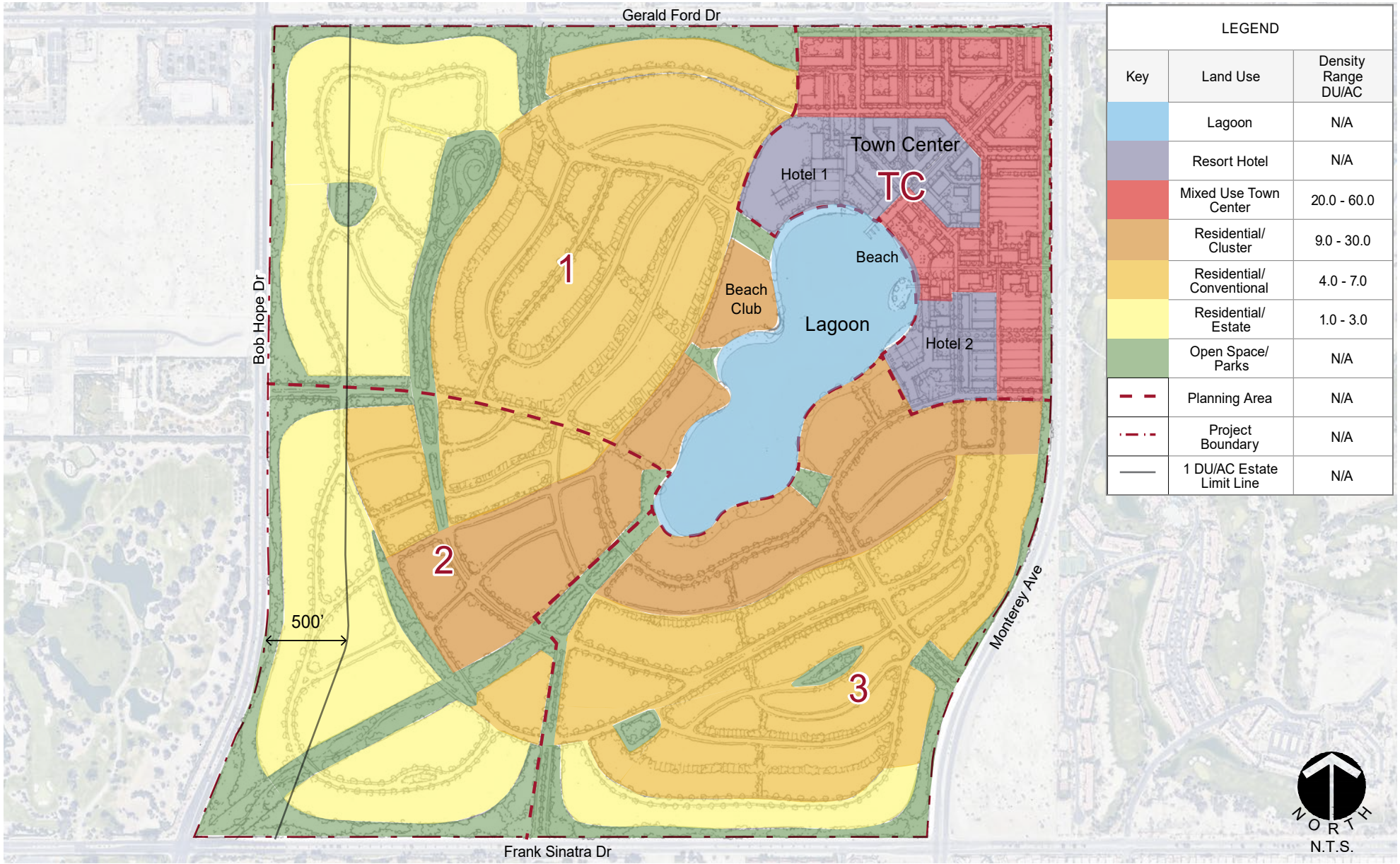
portions of PAs 1, 2, and 3, maximum buildings heights for detached developments would be one story and 20 feet for Estate residences; two stories and 35 feet for Conventional residences; and three stories and 40 feet for Cluster residences. For attached, Cluster residences, building height caps would range from two stories and 35 feet to four stories and 50 feet, depending on the residential product. The Covenant between the Annenberg Foundation Trust and the owner of the Section 31 property (EC Rancho Mirage Holdings Limited Partnership [ECRMH]) includes additional height restrictions designed to minimize visual and other impacts from the Project on the Annenberg Properties, located west of the Project Site. In accordance with the Covenant, buildings within a 500-foot area east of Bob Hope Drive would consist of Estate residences which are limited to one story in height and one du/acre.

Within the Town Center in the northeastern portion of the site, the Project would allow for heights of up to five stories and 65 feet for buildings associated with Mixed-Use and Resort Hotel uses; heights of four stories and 50 feet for Multifamily buildings; and heights of two stories and 29 feet for Commercial buildings. Proposed multistory structures with heights exceeding stated limits may be considered within the Town Center and PA 3 if there is no substantial impact on adjacent properties and the overall unit count of 1,932 residential units is not exceeded. Within the Town Center, the maximum height of any architectural projection generally will not exceed 12 feet above the proposed building height, but will be evaluated based on architectural merit and variances may be approved by the City Council.[5] Stand-alone tower elements, such as clock towers, are permitted to reach up to 50 feet in height, so long as their footprint is not larger than 400 square feet.

Building Setbacks

As shown in **Figure 5.1-4: Conceptual Land Use Plan**, the concept plan for the interior of the Project Site includes building setbacks as delineated in the Section 31 Specific Plan. The Section 31 Specific Plan, Chapter 4.3, Town Center Development Standards, and Chapter 5.4, Development Standards, go into more detail regarding the setback requirements for development components within the Project Site. For setback purposes, setbacks are measured from the back of the curb, edge of the pavement (for streets without a raised curb), the back of a sidewalk (if present), or a public right-of-way (if present).Within the Town Center, there would be no minimum required front, side, or rear setbacks for Mixed Use and Commercial buildings, while Multifamily and Resort/Hotel buildings would require 10-foot minimum front and corner side setbacks. Further, Multifamily buildings would have no minimum interior side or rear setbacks, while those for Resort/Hotel buildings would be 10 feet.

5 Refer to Chapter 4.3, Town Center Development Standards and Chapter 5.4, Development Standards.



SOURCE: Hart Howerton - 2019, MSA Consulting Inc. - 2019

FIGURE **5.1-4**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Conceptual Land Use Plan

204-001-018

Within PAs 1, 2, and 3, residential detached buildings would have minimum setbacks ranging from 8 feet for Cluster development to 50 feet for Estate; interior side building setbacks would range from 3 feet for Cluster to 25 feet for Estate; corner side building setbacks from 7 to 35 feet; and rear building setbacks ranging from 12 to 30 feet. For attached residential buildings, front building setbacks would range from 5 to 20 feet depending on the residential product; 0 to 8 feet for interior side building setbacks; 5 to 25 feet for corner side building setbacks; and 5 to 12 feet for rear building setbacks.

Mass, Scale, and Form

Due to the mix of building types the Section 31 Specific Plan would allow, the Specific Plan would allow a variety of design styles, and a range of colors, materials, building detailing, and building orientations. While the Section 31 Specific Plan does not establish or require any particular architectural style, it includes design guidelines which establish a consistency of styles throughout the Project Site in order to ensure a coherent and complementary development. Design guidelines for the Town Center and Residential land use areas pertain to specifics related to the particular site, building, landscape, signage, lighting, walls, hardscape, and environmental design. Similar to development standards, certain design guidelines constitute regulations and requirements by which development must abide, although the design guidelines outlined in the Specific Plan generally identify actions or outcomes that should be pursued to the maximum extent feasible but are not mandatory so long as the outcome is consistent with what is envisioned overall in the Specific Plan.

Within the Town Center, visual diversity would be promoted through the use of appropriately scaled design elements and details that generate interest and help reduce the appearance of building mass and scale. Building details would include the use of awnings, canopies, arbors, arcades, colonnades, trellises and pergolas; stepping stories back above the ground level; color and material changes; and architectural elements such as roof gables. The building designs will employ clean, simple geometric forms and coordinated massing to produce an overall sense of unity, scale, and interest. All buildings will be designed to have a human scale and relate to pedestrians by incorporating appropriately scaled design elements and details that generate interest and diversity at the street, sidewalk level, and relate the building to the ground plan. Articulation, window area, and façade variation across buildings will avoid blank, featureless wall spaces. Public plazas, outdoor dining, and other pedestrian-oriented amenities shall be established to the maximum extent feasible to divide ground level building façades.

In residential portions of PAs 1, 2, and 3, homes will similarly include a variety of design styles, colors, materials, building detailing, and building orientations. Each housing unit will be individually recognizable, either by varying front setbacks within the same structure or by staggering unit plans. The distinction between units also derives from projecting features such as balconies, porches, bays, and dormers. A

variety of roof types and colors are permitted and shall be implemented to the maximum extent feasible, and recessed or projected doors, windows, porches, and entryways should be designed as defining architectural features of structures' identity.

The materials for each building across all Planning Areas will be of high quality so that over time, the colors and textures would retain their original form and convey a sense of durability and permanence. To avoid monotony, a variety of complementary color schemes will be used.

Lighting Design

Lighting design throughout the Project Site will illuminate only the areas and elements intended such as paths, entryways, and focal elements in order to highlight design and landscaping features, reinforce the community theme, and help ensure pedestrian and vehicular safety. Lighting would also be used for security and safety of on-site areas such as parking, loading, shipping, and receiving and would respect the requirements and guidelines of the Mount Palomar restricted nighttime light zone, as identified in Riverside County's Ordinance No. 655. All lighting shall be architectural, hooded, and directed downward to minimize light and direct glare impacts on neighboring properties and pedestrian or vehicular sight lines and reduce impacts on dark skies. They would also be equipped with fixture dimming and cut-off capability as certified by the International Dark Sky Association. Stylized roadway light fixtures would be consistent throughout the Project Site and complementary to the architectural styles of the area as well as comply with the Rancho Mirage Municipal Code. For the Town Center, specific lighting design standards included in the Section 31 Specific Plan outline the City's intent for a standardized light source technology consisting of high efficacy, solid-state LED (light emitting diode) lighting with a high color rendering index (CRI). Further, the Section 31 Specific Plan recommends the incorporation of circadian sensitive lighting design within the Town Center for better color, improved vision, increased safety and security, as well as supporting circadian wellness for residents and visitors to the Town Center.

The following Project Design Features (PDFs), including those outlined in the Section 31 Specific Plan, are applicable to development within the Project Site and would minimize light and glare impacts on the surrounding roadways and land uses.

PDF 5.1-1: "Dark Sky-Friendly" lighting shall be designed to protect the beauty of the desert sky and shall respect the requirements and guidelines of the Mount Palomar restricted nighttime light zone, as identified in Riverside County's Ordinance No. 655. Uplighting is discouraged except for well-shielded landscape accent lighting. Maximum lamp wattage requirements shall be established for different lighting types to minimize obtrusive and unnecessary lighting and conserve energy resources to the greatest extent possible.

PDF 5.1-2: All light fixtures shall be hooded and directed downward to minimize light and direct glare impacts on neighboring properties and reduce impact on dark skies; directed to illuminate only the areas and elements intended, such as paths, entryways, and focal elements; shielded to avoid direct views of any unshielded light source from pedestrian or vehicular sight lines; shielded to direct light spillover away from adjacent residential areas with 100 percent cutoff capability; and equipped with fixture dimming and cutoff capability as certified by the International Dark Sky Association.

PDF 5.1-3: Development shall minimize light pollution by avoiding outdoor lighting where unnecessary, emphasizing shielded fixtures and avoiding overhead lighting of areas such as walkways. Low scale, accent, and back lighting shall be used to highlight key entry points, signage, enhanced intersections, and feature landscaping. The use of light-emitting diode (LED) lighting or organic light-emitting diode (OLED) lighting is encouraged, so long as blue or cool-white LEDs are shielded properly to prevent light pollution.

PDF 5.1-4: Externally illuminated signs or backlighting of individual sign letters shall be the standard. Digital display signs using LED or similar technology to display images may be considered subject to the approval of a sign program.

PDF 5.1-5: The use of "pole signs," roof signs, temporary lettering on windows, and blinking/flashing signs shall be prohibited. The use of temporary signs is discouraged.

PDF 5.1-6: Light fixtures shall be consistent throughout the Project Site and shall be complementary to the architectural styles of the area.

PDF 5.1-7: Exterior lighting shall be designed and located so as not to project off-site or onto adjacent uses, including neighboring residential uses.

PDF 5.1-8: Outdoor lighting associated with the commercial uses shall not adversely impact the on-site or surrounding residential uses, but shall provide sufficient illumination for access and security purposes.

PDF 5.1-9: Automatic timers shall be programmed to maximize personal safety at night while conserving energy.

PDF 5.1-10: Sign illumination shall not interfere or distract from adjacent properties and street traffic, and light sources shall be directed to prevent glare from being seen by passing traffic.

Wall Design

Community walls would be employed primarily in residential areas to serve as noise barriers along adjacent roadways and as physical barriers providing residents with a sense of security and community. Walls of varying heights would be used selectively within the residential areas corresponding to the purpose and location of each wall and closely related to the building the wall is designed to complement. The Section 31 Specific Plan provides recommended guidelines and standards related to wall design to ensure consistency in style and quality and durability in construction materials. Landscaping elements are described in conjunction with walls for their ability provide screening and to help soften hard edges. Long sections of walls are intended to be broken up with landscape screening, wall breaks, vertical piers or columns, or façade detailing.

Hardscape Design

The Section 31 Specific Plan permits the incorporation of hardscape elements within residential neighborhoods such as benches, shade structures, tree grates, trash receptacles, and bicycle racks. The Specific Plan encourages some combination of these elements to be used as comfort features and distinctive elements for neighborhood streetscapes. Landscape furniture selections are encouraged to reflect the architectural vernacular of residential areas. Materials and finishes shall be durable, easy to maintain, and deter graffiti, with seating surfaces to consist of materials that have low heat absorption.

Landscape Design

A combination of common and private open space areas will be provided for use by residents of the community as shown in **Figure 5.1-5: Conceptual Open Space Plan.** The Section 31 Specific Plan Conceptual Landscape Plan provides guidelines for the treatment of areas within the Project Site, including the surrounding streets, parkways, development edges, project entries, and open space areas. As shown in **Figure 5.1-6: Conceptual Landscape Plan**, the Conceptual Landscape Plan distinguishes a hierarchy of roadways and identifying key intersections surrounding the Specific Plan area. The Section 31 Specific Plan outlines ten landscape planning zones that are distinct to their location throughout the Project Site. These landscape planning zones includes: Community Gateway, Town Center, Resort Site, Landscaped Edge, Neighborhood Streetscape, Private Entry Parks, Neighborhood Parks, Paseos, Beach Club and Grand Oasis Promenade. Plant materials will be arranged throughout the Project in both formal/geometric and informal/natural (organic) designs, in distinct landscape planning zones with design types contrasting and being complementary to each other. The landscape plan includes the use of desert open space arroyo areas that may function for surface water management as opportunities for recreational uses. The landscape design of the Project includes native, desert landscaping designed to maximize water efficiency and conservation.

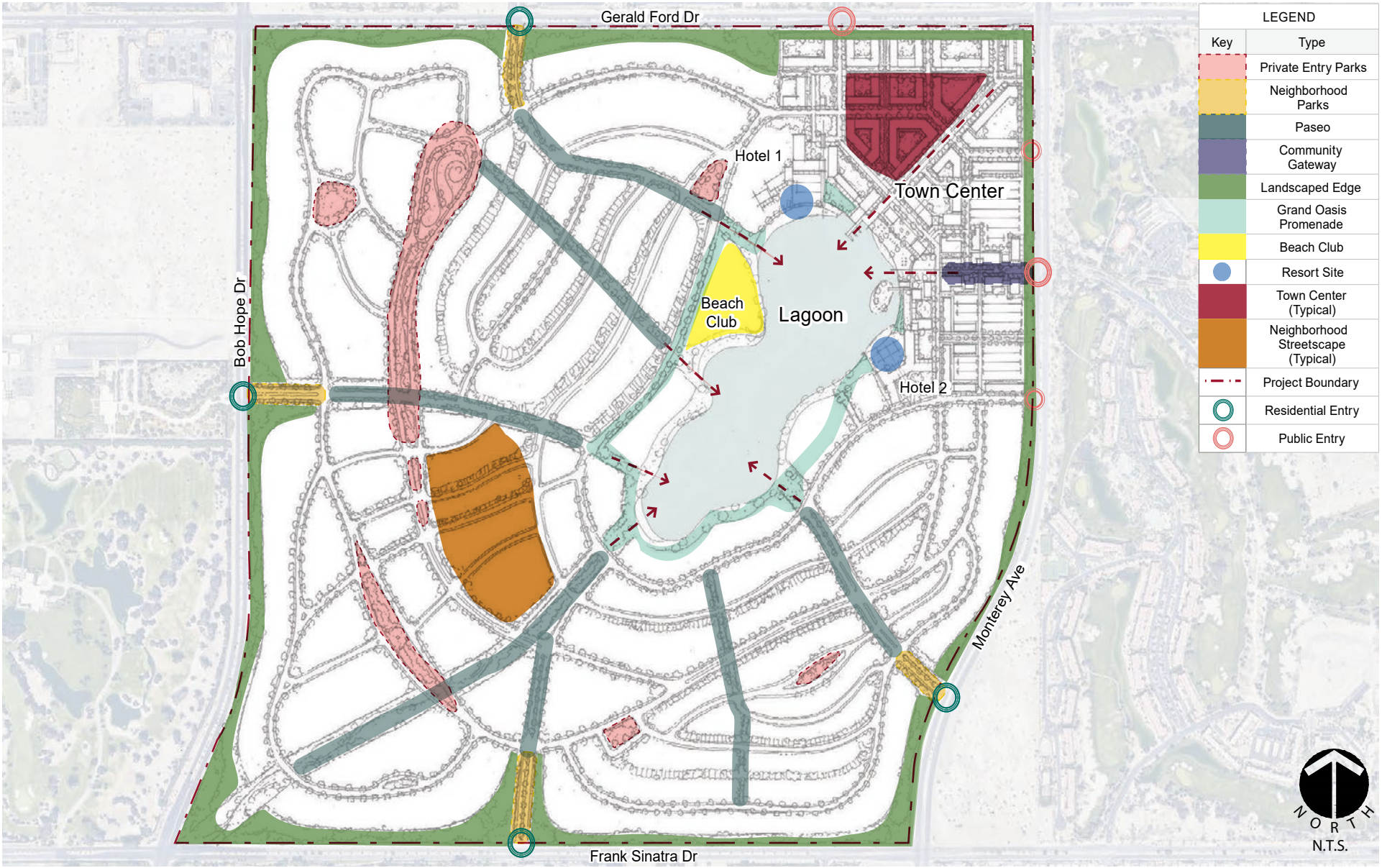
SOURCE: Hart Howerton - 2019, MSA Consulting Inc. - 2019

FIGURE **5.1-5**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Conceptual Open Space Plan

204-001-018



SOURCE: Hart Howerton - 2019, MSA Consulting Inc. - 2019

FIGURE **5.1-6**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Conceptual Landscape Plan

204-001-018

This will be accomplished with the selection and proper layout of water efficient plant materials and a state-of-the-art irrigation system. Water features may also be used to enhance the landscape elements in the Town Center to enhance public spaces and focal points along the streetscape. In addition to providing landscape guidelines for roadways and intersections, the Conceptual Landscape Plan provides direction for landscaping within public and private open spaces.

Broad canopy trees will be utilized to provide shade for sidewalks and vehicles. Shrubs and accent plantings will be substantial to promote long term vigorous growth. Major planting types, such as parking lot shrubs, hedges, or streetscape plants should also reflect the accepted palette. Section 31 Specific Plan, Chapter 2.5, Landscape, Table 4, Plant Material Palette, provides a selection of approved desert-friendly trees and landscaping for the Project, although the Project Site may accommodate similar plantings that respect native plant species and are compatible with the Coachella Valley climate. The use of this vegetation shall match existing surrounding landscape to give unity and identity to the community.

Signage

The Section 31 Specific Plan includes sign design guidelines in the Town Center area addressing community gateway entrance signs; primary entrance signs, retail and resort signs, and complementary signs. The Specific Plan requires the preparation of sign programs on a project-by-project basis. The programs will identify the hierarchy of signs with a common theme and specify the sign locations and styles. These sign programs shall be reviewed by the master developer to provide a consistent and complementary approach within the Town Center area, prior to City approval.

Signs within the residential portions of the Project are restricted to high-quality materials and color palettes that complement the architecture of the surrounding environment. The design of wayfinding signs within the Project shall be consistent in quality of design and implementation and convey the realization of an integrated signage system throughout the community. Secondary entrance/wayfinding signs shall be permitted as monument or wall-mounted signs at each of the other signalized intersection entering the Specific Plan area. Signage throughout the Project shall comply with the City of Rancho Mirage Sign Ordinance 17.28.150 for residential subdivisions.

4. Project Impacts

Threshold 5.1-1: Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

The Project would result in less than significant visual effects on available scenic vistas. Potential viewers of a scenic vista are anyone located within the vicinity of the Project Site are those on public lands, rights-of-way, facilities, or designated scenic highways or adjacent properties, specifically the existing resort and

country club uses to the east and south, residential uses to the north and south, and Sunnylands to the west. While no visually sensitive public lands or facilities, or designated state scenic highways are near the Project Site, Monterey Avenue and Bob Hope Drive, which border the eastern and western sides of the Project Site, respectively, are identified as scenic view corridors to both the north and south in the City's General Plan Community Design Chapter.[6] Additionally, Gerald Ford Drive and Frank Sinatra Drive, which border the northern and southern sides of the Project Site, respectively, are identified as scenic view corridors in the westerly direction.[7] The Little San Bernardino Mountains to the north, Santa Rosa Mountains to the south, and San Jacinto Mountains to the west are considered the visual backdrops of the Project Site.

Figure 5.1-1a and **Figure 5.1-1b** show the views through and across the Project Site from the four major surrounding intersections: southwest from Monterey Avenue and Gerald Ford Drive, northwest from Monterey Avenue and Frank Sinatra Drive, northeast from Bob Hope Drive and Frank Sinatra Drive, and southeast from Bob Hope Drive and Gerald Ford Drive. Views of the mountain ranges to the north, south, and west of the Coachella Valley can be seen by viewers along all four roadways surrounding the Project Site, as shown in **Figure 5.1-7: Public Viewpoints in Vicinity of Project Site**. **Figure 5.1-7a** shows the existing public viewpoints from the rights-of-way surrounding the Project Site of the Little San Bernardino Mountains to the north from Bob Hope Drive at Sunnylands and Frank Sinatra Drive at Kavenish Drive. **Figure 5.1-7b** shows existing public viewpoints of the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains to the south and west from Monterey Avenue looking south (approximately 0.5 miles north of Frank Sinatra Drive) and looking southwest from Shadow Ridge Road. **Figure 5.1-7c** shows existing viewpoints of these mountains ranges from Gerald For Drive looking west (approximately 0.2 miles east of Bob Hope Drive) and looking southwest from Oasis Way. Further public views of the mountain ranges to the south and west are provided in **Figure 5.1-7d** from Bob Hope Drive looking south at Sunnylands and from Frank Sinatra Drive looking west (approximately 0.2 miles west of Monterey Avenue).

6 City of Rancho Mirage, *General Plan*, "Chapter 10: Community Design," *Exhibit 32 Community Design Guidelines, Points of Interest*, 119 (November 2017).

7 City of Rancho Mirage, *General Plan*, "Chapter 10: Community Design," *Exhibit 32 Community Design Guidelines, Points of Interest*, 119 (November 2017).

Bob Hope Drive at Sunnylands looking north

Frank Sinatra Drive at Kavenish Drive looking north

SOURCE: Google Earth - 2019

FIGURE **5.1-7a**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Public Viewpoints in Vicinity of Project Site

204-001-018

Monterey Avenue looking south

Monterey Avenue at Shadow Ridge Road looking southwest

SOURCE: Google Earth - 2019

FIGURE **5.1-7b**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Public Viewpoints in Vicinity of Project Site

204-001-018

Gerald Ford Drive looking west

Gerald Ford Drive at Oasis Way looking southwest

SOURCE: Google Earth - 2019

FIGURE **5.1-7c**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Public Viewpoints in Vicinity of Project Site

204-001-018

Bob Hope Drive at Sunnylands looking south

Frank Sinatra Drive looking west

SOURCE: Google Earth - 2019

FIGURE **5.1-7d**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Public Viewpoints in Vicinity of Project Site

204-001-018

The Project Site is located in an urban, primarily developed area. As described previously, all major resort and residential developments surrounding the Project Site are bordered by approximately 5-foot-high walls and landscaping adjacent to street frontages, including single-family residences to the north, the Marriott Shadow Ridge Resort to the east, the Rancho Mirage Country Club and single-family residences to the south, and Sunnylands to the west. **Figure 5.1-7a** through **Figure 5.1-7d** depict the typical walls, landscaping, rooftops, and/or façades of adjacent developments surrounding the Project Site, including multistory buildings east across Monterey Avenue and single-story residences to the north across Gerald Ford Drive and to the south across Frank Sinatra Drive. These developments, walls, and associated landscaping would limit views of distant mountain ranges from both residents of adjacent properties and from motorists along roadways surrounding the Project Site.

One of the Project's main objectives is to ensure compatibility with existing, proposed, and planned development near the Project Site by applying appropriate planning, landscaping, and architectural design approaches. Planning Areas within the Project Site would be designed to be architecturally compatible with the existing uses surrounding the Project Site, including Sunnylands. Consistent with the Covenant Agreement between the Annenberg Foundation Trust and ECRMH, Estate residential buildings in the western portion of PA 2 near Bob Hope Drive would be limited to one story and 20 feet in height. Residential lots in these areas would be the least dense in the Project, generally one acre in size and one to three du/acre, with densities increasing gradually toward the Grand Oasis lagoon and the Town Center. Towards the center of the Project Site, Conventional Residential and Cluster Residential buildings could reach heights of two and three stories with densities of 4–7 and 9—30 du/acre, respectively. In the Town Center, building heights could reach up to two stories and 29 feet for Commercial buildings; four stories and 50 feet for Multifamily buildings; and five stories and 65 feet for Mixed-Use and Resort Hotel buildings, with densities in the Town Center ranging from 20 to 60 du/acre.

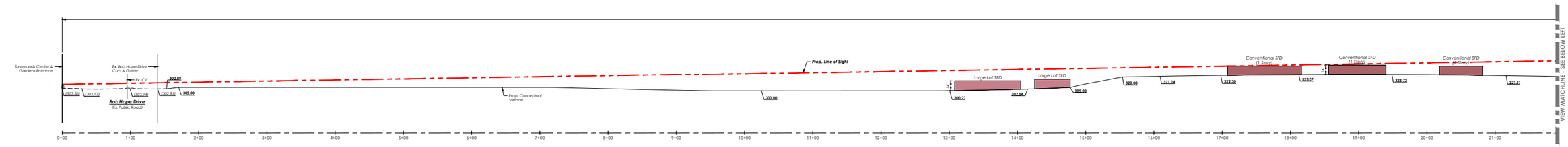
As mentioned previously, existing elevations across the existing Project Site range from approximately 319 feet amsl at the northeastern corner to approximately 254 feet amsl at the southwestern corner, with the highest points running diagonally through the center of the Project Site. As discussed in *Chapter B.3: Project Design Features* and illustrated in **Figure 5.1-8a: Proposed Cross Section—Looking North and Figure 5.1-8b: Proposed Cross Section—Looking East**, the Project has been designed to take advantage of existing on-site topographical variation by creating two elevated mounds that accommodate terraced homes sites within the Project Site, one in the northwest quadrant (PA 1) with an approximate elevation of 340 feet and a second in the southeast quadrant (PA 3) with an elevation of approximately 320 feet. The Grand Oasis lagoon is sited between these and forms the northerly end of a southwest trending open space corridor. Proposed elevations across the Project Site would slightly increase from southwest to northeast, similar to existing conditions, with subtle variation from the elevated mounds. As previously

shown in **Figure 5.1-3**, the lagoon and central open space corridor would exhibit the lowest elevations within the Project, with a water surface elevation of 275 feet and an elevation of 260 feet after grading at the southwestern corner of the Project Site. The northeastern corner of the Project Site will have an elevation of 315 feet after grading. The elevated mounds would gradually increase in elevation and be oriented towards interior portions of the Project Site away from adjacent roadways. As mentioned previously, the visibility of an object decreases as the distance from the observer increases. Accordingly, the increase in elevation on the Project Site would be gradual and would not obstruct panoramic views of the broader geographic area.

Additionally, as discussed in **Section 5.4: Cultural Resources** of this Draft EIR, the Annenberg Estate (71-800 Frank Sinatra Drive) is the closest property on the City's local registry of historic places to the Project Site, located approximately 0.25 miles west of the site across Bob Hope Drive. The next closest locally-designated historic property, El Rancho Harpo at 71-111 La Paz Road, is approximately 0.8 miles west of the Project Site. As shown in **Figure 5.1-8c: Proposed Cross Section—Looking Northwest at Annenberg Estate Line of Sight**, the distance of the Annenberg Estate from the Project Site, as well as substantial separation through physical features such as topography and intervening buildings, walls, and landscaping, would preclude a direct line of sight from height of the tallest permitted buildings within the Town Center to the Annenberg Estate.

Further, the Section 31 Specific Plan establishes minimum setback standards for development of the Project Site, in *Chapter B.3: Project Design Features* of this section. These setback standards are intended to correspond with the density pattern of the site, with larger setbacks established for lower density residential development in the western and southern portions, and more cohesively integrate the Project Site with surrounding properties. Building setbacks would gradually lessen as development transitioned to higher densities near the central and northeastern portions of the site.

The Project would also incorporate rights-of-way improvements and landscape treatments along surrounding roadways, as appropriate, such as the incorporation of drought-tolerant plants and trees similar to other developed properties along surrounding roadway arterials. Accordingly, all Planning Areas would be surrounded by the Landscaped Edge that forms the perimeter of the Project Site. The Landscaped Edge would consist of a six-foot-wide sidewalk and varied landscaping. Adjacent to PAs 1, 2, and 3 and the northern side of the Town Center along Gerald Ford Drive, the Landscaped Edge would border a six-foot-high stucco finished wall abutting the rear yards of residential lots. Trees would be set back from the curb a minimum of three feet and be placed strategically within the Landscaped Edge to either screen a view or to frame a view of the distant mountains.



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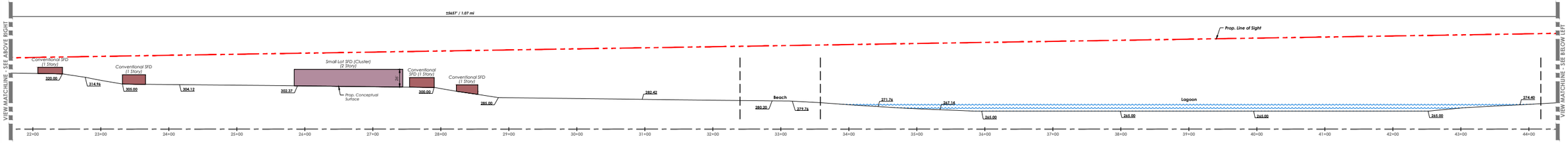

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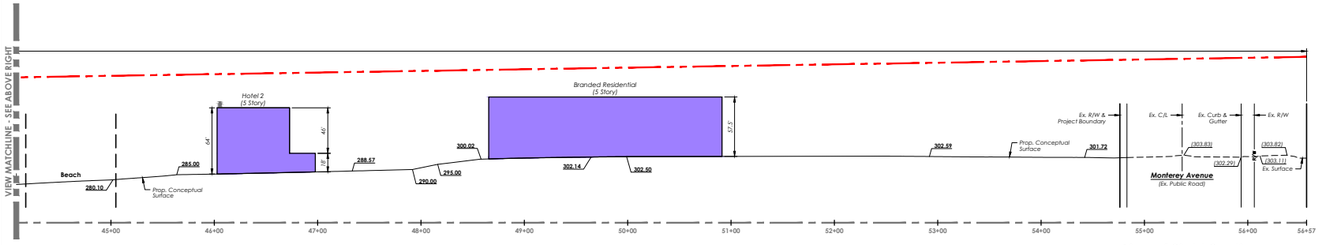

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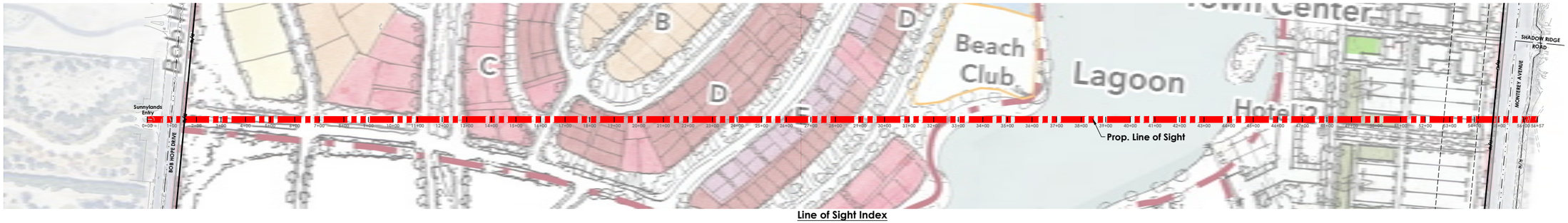


Line of Sight Index

0 150 300 600
APPROXIMATE SCALE IN FEET

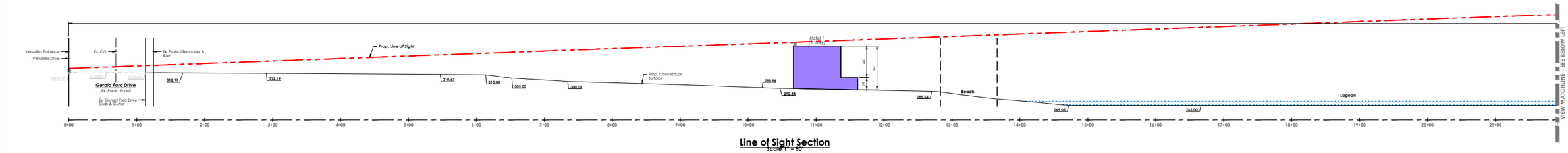
SOURCE: MSA Consulting, Inc. — June 2019

FIGURE **5.1-8a**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Proposed Cross Section—Looking North

204-001-18



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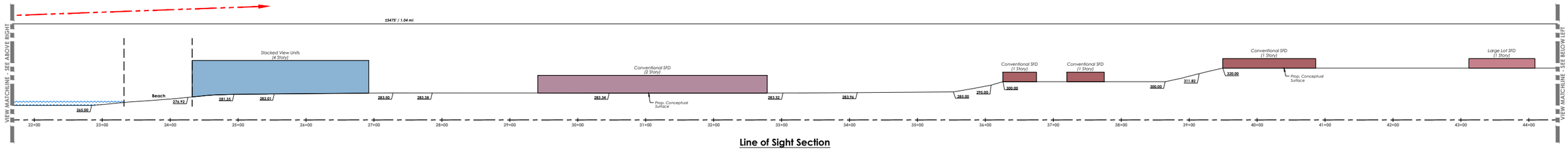

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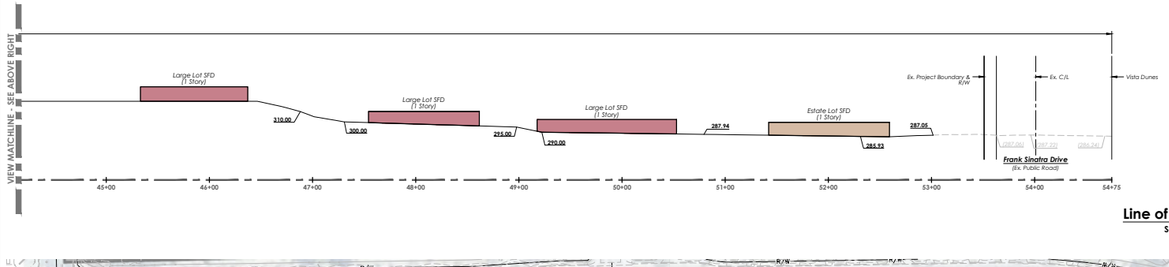

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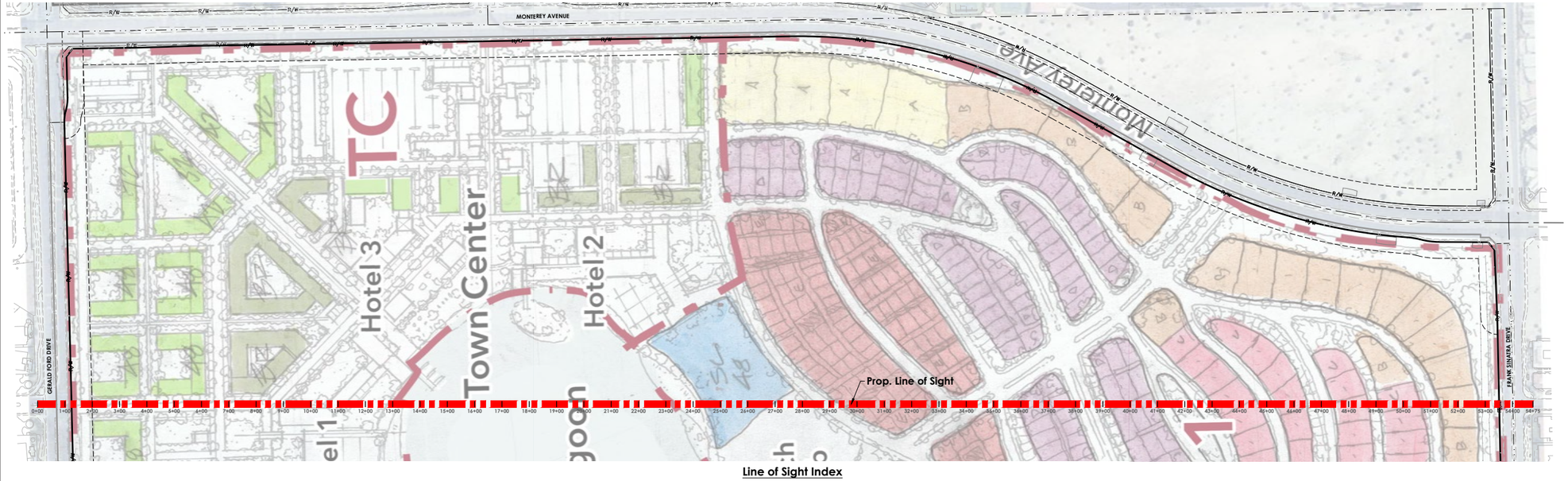


Line of Sight Index

0 150 300 600
APPROXIMATE SCALE IN FEET

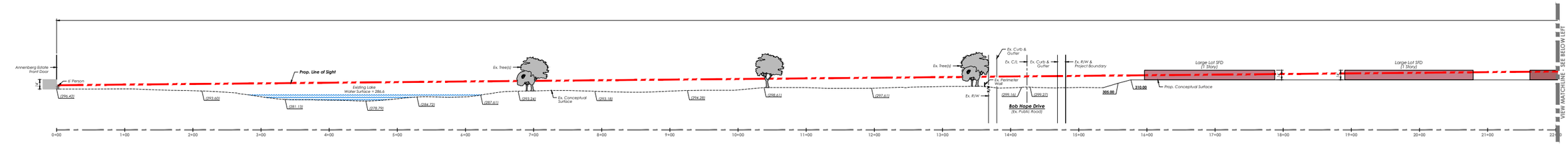
SOURCE: MSA Consulting, Inc. — June 2019

FIGURE **5.1-8b**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE

Proposed Cross Section—Looking East

204-001-18



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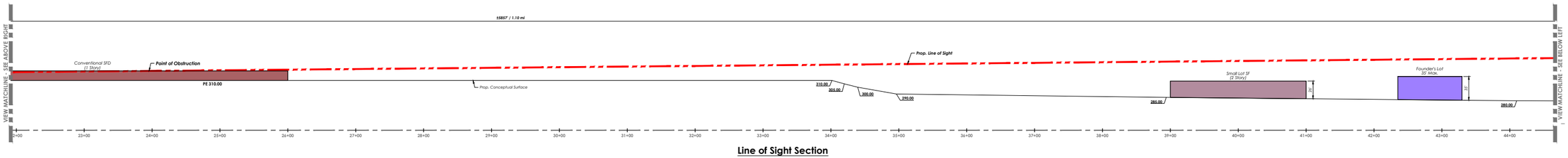

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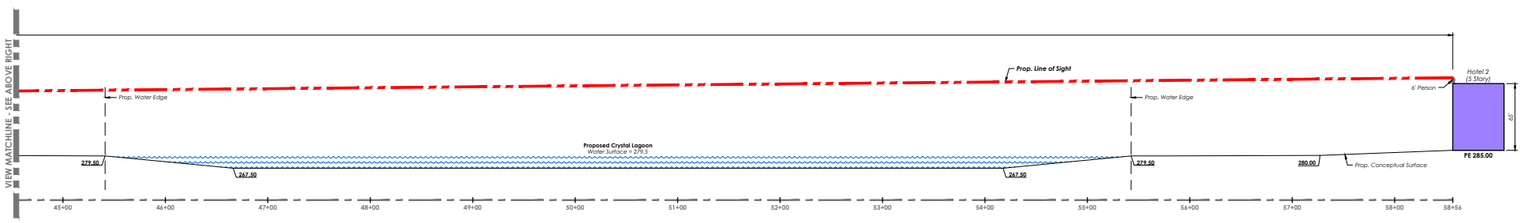

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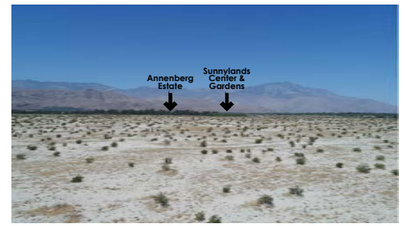
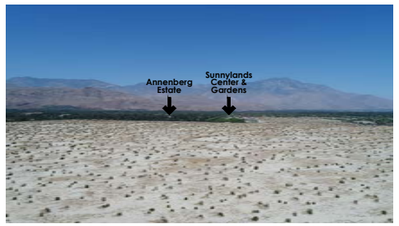
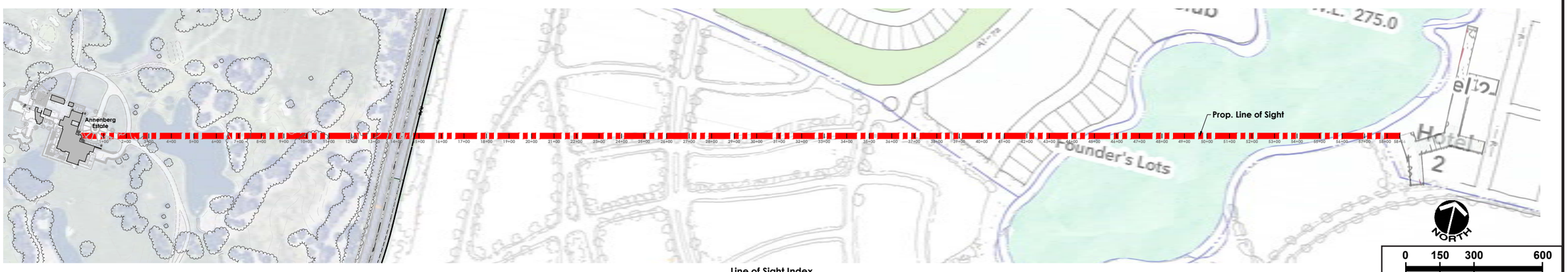


View of Annenberg Estate @ 50 ft. Height



View of Annenberg Estate @ 200 ft. Height



Line of Sight Index

SOURCE: MSA Consulting, Inc. — July 2019

FIGURE **5.1-8c**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE

Proposed Cross Section—Looking Northwest at Annenberg Estate Line of Sight

204-001-18

As shown in **Figure 5.1-9: Visual Simulation Location Map**, five photographic visual simulations were developed to provide representative illustrations of the buildings and site improvements the Specific Plan would permit. **Figure 5.1-10: Simulation of Project Site Looking South Along Gerald Ford Drive—View A** depicts a view of the Project Site looking south from Gerald Ford Drive along the north of the Project Site. **Figure 5.1-11: Simulation of Project Site Looking West Along Monterey Avenue—View B** presents a view of the Project Site looking west from Monterey Avenue along the east of the Project Site. It should be noted that these visual simulations depict buildings of the highest anticipated build height within the Town Center, at approximately 60–62 feet. As such, **Figure 5.1-12: Conceptual Illustration of Maximum Building Heights—Views A and B** demonstrates the maximum estimated potential for the Project to obstruct views of surrounding mountain ranges from area roadways. As illustrated from these viewpoints, the commercial development within the Town Center located at the northeastern corner of the Project Site would largely obstruct views of the Santa Rosa Mountains and San Jacinto to the south and west, respectively. However, as described throughout this document, the density pattern of the site would gradually increase as development transitioned to higher densities near the central and northeastern portions of the site to best integrate the Project Site with surrounding properties, as shown in **Figure 5.1-10**. Further, obstruction of views of the mountains from Gerald Ford Drive and Monterey Avenue would be limited to the portions of those streets located adjacent to the Town Center, and would be limited in duration as pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles travel along these streets. Because views would be limited to only portions of these streets adjacent to the Town Center, the impact on views of the mountains available from Gerald Ford Drive and Monterey Avenue is not significant.

Figure 5.1-13: Simulation of Project Site Looking North Along Frank Sinatra Drive—View C depicts a view of the Project looking north from Frank Sinatra Drive along the south of the Project Site. **Figure 5.1-14: Simulation of Project Site Looking Northeast Along Bob Hope Drive—View D** depicts an aerial view of the Project Site looking northeast from Bob Hope Drive along the west of the Project Site. As shown in **Figures 5.1-13** and **5.1-14**, short- and long-range views across the Project Site of the Little San Bernardino Mountains are currently limited due to the existing landscaping and elevated berm near the Project Site's southwestern boundary. The development proposed under the Project would extend to the ridgeline but would not substantially change views of the ridgeline across the Project Site. While development of the Project would partially replace views of the Little San Bernardino Mountains to the north and east, the distant ridgeline view within the broader geographic area would remain similar to those under existing conditions due to the long-distance nature of the view.

Lastly, **Figure 5.1-15: Simulation of Project Site Looking Southeast along Bob Hope Drive at Gerald Ford Drive—View E** represents a view of the Project looking southeast from Bob Hope Drive at Gerald Ford Drive. Short- and long-range views across the Project Site of the Santa Rosa Mountains would be partially obstructed by development within the northwestern portion of the Project Site. However, as shown in **Figure 5.1-15**, the Project would not substantially affect the existing available views across the Project Site

because the proposed uses would be similar in size and scale to existing development to the north of Project Site. For these reasons, the impact on available views from this and nearby locations would not be significant.

The scenic vistas on surrounding roadways along Monterey Avenue, Frank Sinatra Drive, Bob Hope Drive, and Gerald Ford Drive or from surrounding vantage points would not be substantially obstructed or adversely impacted by the Project Site because the final elevation, building heights, and landscaping along these roadways would be visually compatible with surrounding land uses and would serve to frame the views of distant mountains for those traveling on these arterial roadways. Additionally, all development enabled by the Project would be designed and constructed to conform with the development standards and design guidelines of the Section 31 Specific Plan to ensure consistency and compatibility with the anticipated uses on-site. Accordingly, impacts would be less than significant.

Threshold 5.1-2: 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?

The Project includes development of an infill site with a mixed-use, master planned community across four Planning Areas that is comparable to surrounding uses. The Project would consist of a combination of resort hotel uses, a complimentary mixed-use Town Center, and a variety of residential neighborhoods, all surrounding a 34-acre Grand Oasis lagoon. PAs 1, 2, and 3 would consist of a gated community with residential and open space amenities; the Town Center would contain publicly-accessible commercial, resort, and residential amenities. The Project would be subject to the provisions outlined in the Section 31 Specific Plan.

The Project would support development within the Town Center that is more compact and urban than the lower scale, residential areas elsewhere within the Project Site. With the clustering of buildings, the Project would provide smaller, more intimate plazas and elaborate streetscapes, while also offering opportunities for larger parkland settings for future residents and visitors. The Section 31 Specific Plan outline specific development standards and design guidelines that would ensure that buildings and structures proposed within the Project Site would be developed to be sensitive to and compatible with existing and future land uses both surrounding the Project Site.[8] PAs 1, 2, and 3 would provide for residential buildings with a maximum height of 40 feet at the interior of the Project Site and lower density.

8 Refer to Chapter 4, Town Center Development and Chapter 5, Residential Development.

SOURCE: VisionScape Imagery—July 2019

FIGURE **5.1-9**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Visual Simulation Location Map

204-001-18

Existing View

Proposed View

SOURCE: VisionScape Imagery—July 2019

FIGURE **5.1-10**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Simulation of Project Site Looking South Along Gerald Ford Drive—View A

Existing View

Proposed View

SOURCE: VisionScape Imagery—July 2019

FIGURE **5.1-11**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Simulation of Project Site Looking West Along Monterey Avenue—View B

Proposed View A

Proposed View B

SOURCE: VisionScape Imagery—July 2019

FIGURE **5.1-12**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Conceptual Illustration of Maximum Building Heights—Views A and B

Existing View

Proposed View

SOURCE: VisionScape Imagery—July 2019

FIGURE **5.1-13**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Simulation of Project Site Looking North Along Frank Sinatra Drive—View C

Existing View

Proposed View

SOURCE: VisionScape Imagery—July 2019

FIGURE **5.1-14**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Simulation of Project Site Looking Northeast Along Bob Hope Drive—View D

Existing View

Proposed View

SOURCE: VisionScape Imagery—July 2019

FIGURE **5.1-15**

CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE ©

Simulation of Project Site Looking Southeast along Bob Hope Drive at Gerald Ford Drive—View E

Estate single-family residences with maximum heights of one story and 20 feet on the southern, western, and northwestern sides of the Project Site. These heights are consistent with adjacent single-family developments to the north and south of the Project Site and Sunnylands to the west, as well as the Covenant Agreement between the Annenberg Foundation Trust and ECRMH. Within the Town Center, Resort Hotel, Mixed-Use, and Residential land uses would have a maximum height of 65 feet with wide setbacks and landscaping, similar to existing multistory buildings associated with Marriott's Shadow Ridge Resort development east of the Project Site across Monterey Avenue.

The Project Site is currently zoned with a combination of Resort Hotel (Rs-H) and Low Density Residential (R-L-2), with a specific plan overlay. The Project would result in a zone change to Specific Plan. As set forth in Section 17.54.030 of the City's Municipal Code, a specific plan is designed to provide for flexibility, and the innovative use of land resources and development. The Section 31 Specific Plan include standards and guidelines that would ensure high-quality design and creativity in site planning and architectural design, while allowing for variation and flexibility. Standards and guidelines are provided therein for the treatment of surrounding streets, internal streetscapes, resort sites, development edges, setback areas, Project entries, neighborhood parks, and open space areas, as shown in **Figure 5.1-5** and **Figure 5.1-6**. The landscape palette proposed by the Project not only provides a selection of desert-friendly trees and landscaping for the Project, but also includes ornamental varieties of trees, shrubs, groundcovers, and vines that would provide seasonal interest, color, texture, and form that would be appropriate to various land uses and areas of the site. Therefore, the Project would be designed with uses and landscaping consistent with the existing uses surrounding the Project Site.

As stated in **Section 3.0**, a proposed and necessary action of the Project involves the City's approval of a General Plan Amendment and Zone Change to change the land use designations for the Project Site from Low Density Residential (R-L-2) and Resort Hotel (Rs-H) to Specific Plan with a Mixed Use (M-U) underlay. Although the Project would substantially alter the visual appearance of the Project Site from vacant to developed land at higher building heights and densities than currently enabled, adherence to the development standards and design guidelines outlined in the Section 31 Specific Plan and identified above in *Chapter B.3: Project Design Features*, development of the proposed mix of land uses within the Project Site would ensure that the Project Site would be developed as a high-quality master planned community and would not negatively impact the aesthetic appearance of the Project Site or surrounding area.

Therefore, the Project is consistent with the City's existing zoning and General Plan because it incorporates an innovative design around a unique recreational amenity to allow for the successful development of two resort hotels, a vibrant town center, and walkable residential neighborhoods, as envisioned for this site in the City's zoning ordinances. As some portions of the Project Site would have

building heights and densities greater than permitted in the R-L-2 and Rs-H zone, impacts to visual character would be potentially significant.

Implementation of Mitigation Measures **MM 5.1-1** through **5.1-3** would ensure the Project Site is developed in a manner that is compatible with the surrounding residential and non-residential developments through the inclusion of high-quality architecture and landscape design, consistent with City standards. Impacts would to be less than significant with incorporation of the PDFs identified in *Chapter B.3: Project Design Features* of this section, as well as through implementation of Mitigation Measures **MM 5.1-1** through **5.1-3**.

While the Project would change the views of the site and surrounding areas, this change is not considered a significant adverse effect because the incorporation of the PDFs and implementation of Mitigation Measures **MM 5.1-1** through **5.1-3** would ensure that: (1) the buildings closer to the perimeter of the Project Site would be comparable to the existing buildings on the adjacent properties (e.g. Sunnylands, Shadow Ridge, and other residential neighborhoods); (2) the Project would be surrounded by wide setback areas that incorporate desert plantings, trees, and perimeter walls; and (3) the taller buildings would be located near the center of the Project Site where they will be screened by landscaping and smaller buildings. In addition, the distance between the taller buildings and perimeter of the Project Site would help further minimize the effects on views from adjacent roads and developments. Impacts would be less than significant.

Threshold 5.1-3: Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

The only light and glare sources in the Project Site are from streetlights at major surrounding intersections, and minimal light from the land uses east of the Project Site across Monterey Avenue, south across Frank Sinatra Drive, west across Bob Hope Drive, and north across Gerald Ford Drive. Another source of glare and nighttime light in the vicinity of the Project Site includes vehicular traffic along surrounding roadways.

Future development proposed by the Section 31 Specific Plan would introduce new light and glare sources typical of residential, commercial, mixed-use, and resort uses and recreational lighting in the Project Site. Nighttime illumination would also be used to highlight building design and landscape features and to create a feeling of security and safety for pedestrians and vehicles. Other sources of light would include security lighting, nighttime traffic, and sign illumination. Lighting from the Project Site would be visible from surrounding areas that are currently undeveloped or sparely developed. However, the new light sources introduced by the Project would be similar to the existing light and glare associated with the surrounding developed properties.

Project Design Features PDF 5.1-1 through PDF 5.1-10 will require that individual projects adhere to "Dark Sky-Friendly" lighting to minimize nighttime light pollution which could affect the Mount Palomar Observatory, require light fixtures to be hooded and directed downward to minimize light and direct glare impacts on neighboring properties, prohibit blinking/flashing signs, and maximize personal safety at night. Sign illumination will be directed in a manner to prevent glare from passing traffic.

Therefore, although the Project would provide substantial new light and glare sources, the impacts to the surrounding areas would not have a significant impact with adherence to the Specific Plan building and development standards, and incorporation of Project Design Features PDF 5.1-1 through PDF 5.1-10. Accordingly, impacts would be less than significant.

5. Cumulative Impacts

The evaluation of aesthetic and visual impacts is by nature a subjective exercise due to widely varying personal perceptions. However, implementation of the Project would alter views of surrounding visual resources and would also alter the visual character of the Project Site and surrounding areas. More specifically, the Project Site would be developed pursuant to the Section 31 Specific Plan, which would allow for a mixed-use, master-planned community that would include residential, mixed use core, and lagoon land uses. As shown in **Figure 5.1-4**, the Specific Plan designates four Planning Areas and their associated acreages and delineates the general amount, type, and distribution of development throughout the Project Site.

Upon development of the Project Site and surrounding vacant lands, cumulative development would result in substantial changes to the visual character of the Project Site and add to the creation of nighttime light and glare. However, this would not constitute a significant adverse impact as the Project Site and surrounding area would be developed in accordance with the anticipated development that would occur in these areas per the City's General Plan. Additionally, the design standards and guidelines outlined in the Section 31 Specific Plan would ensure that high quality architecture, walls, and landscaping would be provided along the Project frontages in a manner that would preserve and enhance the character of the Project Site and surrounding land uses. Further, the Project would include improvements in the rights-of-way surrounding the Project Site and develop a Landscaped Edge Multiuse Path to provide a continuous system of publicly accessible pathways integrated into the perimeter public arterial streetscapes. Additionally, development projects proposed on the vacant surrounding lands would be required to adhere to the architectural, design, and lighting measures related to aesthetics and community design outlined in the City's General Plan and/or respective specific plan if located therein.

As with the Project, related projects and other future growth would be subject to compliance with the City's General Plan related to aesthetics and community design, among other topics of environmental

concern. As previously discussed, the aesthetic impacts of the Project associated with effects upon the existing visual character of the Project Site and its surrounding area have been evaluated above and were found to be less than significant on a project-specific basis. Potential Project-related impacts from the generation of nighttime light and glare have been found to be less than significant, with compliance with the existing regulations, standard conditions, provisions outlined in the Specific Plan, and through implementation of Mitigation Measures **MM 5.1-1** through **5.1-3**. In consideration of the preceding factors, the Project's contribution to cumulative aesthetic impacts would be less than considerable. Therefore, cumulative aesthetic impacts would be less than significant.

C. MITIGATION MEASURES

In addition to the incorporation of the Project Design Features identified above, the following mitigation measures are identified to reduce aesthetics impacts:

MM 5.1-1: The Specific Plan shall include the placement of buildings in a manner that is compatible with the surrounding residential and non-residential developments. This would include the location of taller buildings near the center of the Project Site where they will be screened by landscaping and smaller buildings.

MM 5.1-2: The Specific Plan shall utilize landscape buffers and edging along the boundaries of the Project Site, as depicted in *Figure 2.5* of the Section 31 Specific Plan.

MM 5.1-3: The Specific Plan shall incorporate a solid distinctive wall which would be used at the perimeter of the Project Site as well as inside the Project Site adjacent to major streets and landscape areas, as depicted in *Figure 2.8* of the Section 31 Specific Plan. Perimeter walls of the residential communities would be 6 feet in height and the Town Center would include a maximum of 3-foot-high perimeter walls. Screening with wood, chain-link, or similar fencing materials is not permitted bordering or within the Project Site.

D. LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

Compliance with the provisions outlined in the Section 31 Specific Plan, Project Design Features PDF 5.1-1 through 5.1-10, and existing City regulations would reduce potential impacts associated with aesthetics and light and glare to a level that is less than significant. The Project's potential impacts related to the visual character of the Project Site would be reduced to a level of less than significant through implementation of Mitigation Measures **MM 5.1-1** through **5.1-3.** Therefore, the Project would not result in Project-specific or cumulatively considerable significant unavoidable adverse impacts relating to aesthetics and lighting.