4.1 AESTHETICS

Note: After the Draft EIR was released, the applicant chose to remove the car wash facilities from the Project site, and use of the car wash area is no longer part of the proposal. All references to future use of the car wash area have been removed from the project description and the impact analysis.

This section addresses impacts from grading, vegetation removal, and other improvements at the Project site on views from the adjacent regional open space identified as “Public Lands with View Opportunities” in the Goleta General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan (GP/CLUP) (City of Goleta 2006).

4.1.1 Existing Conditions

The northern part of the Project site consists of a fully developed mobile home park, bordered by single and multifamily residences on the east and west. Hollister Avenue adjoins the mobile home park on the north, and commercial development is located across the street. Hollister Avenue is designated as a scenic corridor; however, no scenic views are to be protected in the Project vicinity (City of Goleta 2006). The southern portion of the mobile home park includes the paved hammerhead turnaround, the former car wash area, and undeveloped environmentally sensitive habitat south of the paved area. Figure 4-1 shows a view of the mobile home park looking south from an area near the pool; Figure 4-2 shows the turnaround and former car wash area.

The City-owned property south of the mobile home park includes a narrow corridor containing an informal trail connecting to the Ellwood-Mesa trail system, with nonnative, weedy grasses established on either side (Figure 4-3). This area contrasts with the dense, tall canopy of riparian trees growing along Devereux Creek. A steep (3:1 slope) concrete wall, approximately 4 feet tall, contains the floodplain on the northern bank of the creek (Figure 4-4). This wall may appear shortened by the accumulation of fill. A wooden fence forms the border between the grassy corridor and the single family residential area to the north, and woody debris is present in some areas (Figure 4-3).

Views within the mobile home park are largely limited to the immediately surrounding area due to the presence of mobile home units, which provide screening, and the wall along Hollister Avenue. A number of public trails are located south of the Project site in an area designated as “Public Lands with View Opportunities” in the GP/CLUP (City of Goleta 2006), but views of the Project site from this area are restricted by the dense canopy of trees that is present along Devereux Creek.

4.1.2 Regulatory Framework

4.1.2.1 Federal

No federal regulations relevant to aesthetics apply to this Project.

4.1.2.2 State

Government Code § 65302.4

Government Code § 65302.4 authorizes the general plan to express community intentions regarding urban form and design. These expressions may provide for specific measures to regulate relationships between buildings as well as between buildings and outdoor public areas, including streets.
Figure 4.1-1  Rancho Goleta Estates Mobile Home Park

Figure 4.1-2  Hammerhead Turnaround and Former Car Wash Area
Figure 4.1-3  Unpaved Trail/Site of Access Road

Figure 4.1-4  Emergency Road Access at Coronado Drive
4.1.2.3 Local

General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan Policy
Chapter 6.0 of the City’s GP/CLUP, the Visual and Historic Resources Element, provides objectives and policies that address the issues involving the identification and protection of scenic resources. The guiding objectives for these visual resource policies are as follows:

- To identify, preserve, and enhance Goleta’s scenic resources and to protect views or vistas to these resources from public and private areas (Policy VH-1, Scenic Views).
- To protect and enhance the visual character and public views within and from Goleta’s scenic corridors and locations from which scenic vistas can be enjoyed (Policy VH-2, Local Scenic Corridors).
- To protect and enhance Goleta’s visual character (Policy VH-3, Community Character).
- To preserve, protect, and enhance Goleta’s character through high quality design (Policy VH-4, Design Review).

4.1.3 Project Impacts

4.1.3.1 Thresholds of Significance

Based on both the City’s Initial Study Checklist (CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G, Environmental Checklist Form), a significant impact on aesthetics and visual resources would occur if the Project would:

1. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
2. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.
3. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
4. Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Based on the City’s Thresholds Manual (City of Goleta 2008), the following questions are intended to provide information to address the above criteria. Affirmative answers to the following questions indicate potentially significant impacts on aesthetics and visual resources.

- Does the project site have significant visual resources by virtue of surface waters, vegetation, elevation, slope or other natural or man-made features which are publicly visible?
  - If so, does the proposed project have the potential to degrade or significantly interfere with the public’s enjoyment of the site’s existing visual resources?
- Does the project have the potential to impact visual resources of the Coastal Zone or another visually important area (i.e., mountainous area, public park, urban fringe, or scenic travel corridor)?
  - If so, does the project have the potential to conflict with the policies set forth in the Local Coastal Plan, Comprehensive Plan or any applicable community plan to protect the identified views?
• Does the project have the potential to create a significantly adverse aesthetic impact through obstruction of public views, incompatibility with surrounding uses, structures, intensity of development, removal of significant amounts of vegetation, loss of important open space, substantial alteration of natural character, lack of adequate landscaping, or extensive grading visible from public areas?

The Project would not affect any scenic vistas because it would be located in a confined area with limited public views, nor would it create any light or glare; therefore, Criteria 1 and 4 are not considered further. Repaving the hammerhead turnaround would not have caused adverse aesthetic effects and thus is not considered further.

4.1.3.2 Project Impacts

Impact AES-1. Scenic Resources
The Project involves installation of a buried water line, replacement of two existing fire hydrants, and installation of two new fire hydrants within the mobile home park site. The fire hydrants would be visually compatible with the developed nature of the mobile home park, which does not contain scenic vistas or resources, and the area where the pipeline would be buried would be restored to its previous condition. Construction of the emergency access road and buried water line would involve temporary disturbance of the corridor along Devereux Creek and would replace the unpaved trail between Coronado Drive and Rancho Goleta Estates with a wider, gravel-covered road and a retaining wall. The slopes north and south of the road would be revegetated with native grasses, which would replace the nonnative, weedy vegetation that is currently present. Replacing the unpaved trail with a gravel access road would not affect scenic resources and would be visually compatible with the surrounding developed area, as would the retaining wall. Replacing the nonnative weedy vegetation with native plants would be a visual improvement. A pipe gate would restrict vehicular access near Coronado Drive, but such gates are already present in the area and this would be minimally intrusive. The road would remain accessible by pedestrians and bicyclists, so no viewpoints would be eliminated. Construction of the access road would require removal of nine trees and associated vegetation. Such trees are scenic resources located in a recreational open space area accessible by the trail that runs along Devereux Creek, and this impact would be significant but mitigable to less than significant (Class II) through implementation of Mitigation Measure (MM) BIO-4 (included in Section 4.2.5) because the trees that would be removed would be replaced.

Impact AES-2. Visual Character and Quality
The addition of a new buried water line in the mobile home park would not adversely affect the area’s visual character or quality, nor would the fire hydrant improvements. The emergency access road and retaining wall would be visually compatible with the adjacent residential development, and replacing the existing weedy vegetation with native grasses would improve the area’s aesthetic qualities. The car wash area, which consists of a hose and faucet would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. Any impacts associated with these aspects of the Project would be less than significant (Class III). As noted above, under Impact AES-1, the Project would remove nine trees, which would cause a significant but mitigable to less than significant (Class II) impact on the area’s visual character and quality. MM BIO-4 would mitigate this impact because the trees that would be removed would be replaced.
4.1.4 Cumulative Impacts
Since the Project site is screened by dense trees from public viewing points, with the exception of the emergency access road, it is unlikely that any public views other than those from the informal trail along Devereux Creek would be substantially altered by Project construction, and views of this area would not be affected by other projects listed in Table 3-1. No cumulative impacts would result from the Project in combination with other related projects.

4.1.5 Mitigation Measures
MM BIO-4 (Section 4.2.5) would mitigate the visual impacts from the loss of trees discussed in Impacts AES-1 and AES-2.

4.1.6 Residual Impacts
Any residual impacts would be less than significant because the trees that would be removed would be replaced. These impacts would not be reduced to less than significant immediately, however, because trees can take a long time to grow, and many years could pass before the aesthetic qualities of the area were fully restored.