

4.1 AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

4.1.1 Existing Setting

Aesthetic values are important aspects of a community in establishing its identity, sense of place, and quality of life. Goleta Valley is well known for the scenic beauty of its open spaces, foothills, and ocean and mountain views. Goleta lies between the Santa Ynez Mountains and the Pacific Ocean. Although the mountains are outside city boundaries, these landforms remain largely undeveloped and provide a scenic backdrop to Goleta's urbanized area. Prominent features of the foothills and mountains are seen throughout the city and include expanses of orchards, chaparral, and rock outcroppings (Goleta GP/CLUP Visual and Historic Resources Element, p. 6-1).

4.1.1.1 Project Site Visual Character

Existing Visual Character

The existing character of the site is vacant land, with little vegetation except around the perimeter, sloping gradually upward away from Cathedral Oaks Road. The existing site elevations range from 145 feet above mean sea level along Cathedral Oaks Road, sloping upward to the northeast corner of the property to 252 feet, with an average slope of 7.8%. Along the edges there are dense trees and shrubs, some of which are located on adjacent property. A few small trees have been planted along Cathedral Oaks Road. The site's visual character is dominated by its current use for composting and woodcutting, which is clearly visible from the adjacent roadway. A chain-link fence surrounds the property, with a gate at the driveway entrance near the southwest corner of the site. The soil surface in the vacant portion of the site is uneven, due to the fact that most of the site has not been graded since the diseased avocado trees were removed several years ago.

Though not visible from most off-site locations, there are three buildings on the site: a single-family house, a garage, and a storage building. These are near the western edge of the property, along a driveway that extends northward from Cathedral Oaks Road approximately halfway up the west side of the property. The residence is bordered by front and back yards. Views of the buildings on the site are screened by dense trees and other vegetation.

The open visual character of the project site contrasts with the surrounding land. To the east, the Glen Annie Golf Course is densely landscaped, with the golf course almost completely screened from view. The visual character of the golf course property is a dense, almost natural-appearing landscape. To the west, the multifamily residential property has a dense, more urban visual character, with nearly contiguous residential buildings bordering the Cathedral Oaks Road, above slopes and low hedges. South of Cathedral Oaks Road, the single-family residential community has a suburban visual character, with relatively narrow and dense layers of landscaping and privacy walls partially screening views of the houses set fairly close to the roadway.

Existing Visual Quality

Views across the site from the surrounding areas have high visual quality due to the visibility of the foothills and the mountains. However, views of the site itself are hampered by the vacant appearance of the majority of the land and the temporary appearance of the woodcutting

operations on the site, which dominate the foreground views. The contrast of the roughly cleared land and the dense perimeter vegetation also reduces the visual quality.

4.1.1.2 Surrounding Uses

The project vicinity includes a mix of residential uses, both single-family and multifamily, open space, and recreational land uses. South of Cathedral Oaks Drive, across from the project site, are single-family residences, with back and side yards facing onto the street behind landscaping and a perimeter wall. Landscaping and a privacy wall partially screen views of the project site, but do not fully block the views. West of the project site are open space/recreation uses, including El Encanto Creek and the bordering riparian area, and the Glen Annie Golf Course. Further to the west, on the opposite side of El Encanto Creek, is Northgate Drive, with multifamily residential development west of that (Evergreen Terrace East). Views of the site from these residences are screened by the existing trees and vegetation along El Encanto Creek.

4.1.1.3 Scenic Corridor

Cathedral Oaks Road is identified as a scenic corridor in the Goleta General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan (GP/CLUP Figure 6-1). GP/CLUP Policy VH 2, *Local Scenic Corridors*, identifies corridors that pass through, or provide visual access to, areas of high scenic value. GP/CLUP Subpolicy VH 2.2 requires that the aesthetic qualities of scenic corridors shall be preserved through retention of the general character of significant natural features and views of the ocean, foothills, and mountainous areas.

In the eastern portion of Goleta, Cathedral Oaks Road is almost entirely bordered by residential development. In the central part of Goleta (between Storke Road and Fairview Avenue), the corridor is bordered primarily by agriculture (citrus and avocados). In western Goleta, there is a combination of residential, recreational, agricultural, open space, and institutional (school) uses. Views of the foothills and Santa Ynez Mountains are available along much of Cathedral Oaks Road.

4.1.1.4 Views of the Site

Figures 4.1-1 through 4.1-3 show existing views of the site from Cathedral Oaks Road and King Daniel Lane, representing the residential neighborhood south of Cathedral Oaks Road. From the east or west on Cathedral Oaks, views of the foothills and mountains are screened by development, topography, and roadside vegetation, as shown in Figures 4.1-1 and 4.1-2. However, immediately adjacent to the site, there is minimal landscaping, and views across the project site to the foothills and mountains beyond are available, as shown in Figure 4.1-3.

Views from the multifamily residences west of the site, on the opposite side of El Encanto Creek and Northgate Drive, are screened by the existing trees and vegetation along El Encanto Creek, and the site is not visible.

Views from the golf course on the west, north, and east side of the site onto the project site are mostly screened by landscaping and topography, but not fully blocked.

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Source: Interacta

Figure 4.1-1
Existing View – Eastbound Cathedral Oaks Road
Shelby Residential Project EIR



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Source: Interacta

Figure 4.1-2
Existing View – Westbound Cathedral Oaks Road
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Source: Interacta



Figure 4.1-3
Existing View – King Daniel Lane
Shelby Residential Project EIR

4.1.2 Regulatory Framework

4.1.2.1 Federal Regulations

There are no federal regulations applicable to this aesthetic analysis.

4.1.2.2 State Regulations

Government Code § 65850

Government Code § 65850 allows counties and cities to regulate the use of buildings, structures, and land to address scenic beauty by regulating such things as the location, height, bulk, number of stories, and size of structures, including the percentage of a lot that may be occupied by structural development and the intensity of land use.

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.

4.1.2.3 Local Regulations

General Plan Policy

Section 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 and Mitigation

4.1.3.1 Thresholds of Significance

Based on both the City's Initial Study Checklist (CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G; Environmental Checklist Form) and the City's *Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual* (Thresholds Manual), a significant impact on aesthetics and visual resources could occur if the project would:

- a. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

- b. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.
- c. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
- d. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.
- e. Have significant visual resources by virtue of surface waters, vegetation, elevation, slope or other natural or man-made features which are publicly visible.
- f. Have the potential to impact visual resources of the Coastal Zone or other visually important area (i.e., mountainous area, public park, urban fringe, or scenic travel corridor).
- g. Have the potential to create a significantly adverse aesthetic impact through obstruction of public views, incompatibility with surrounding uses, structures, or 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.

Items a–d are from the Initial Study Checklist and Items e–g are from the Thresholds Manual.

4.1.3.2 Project Impacts

The project would grade the existing site to provide 60 residential lots and four open space areas, amenities, supporting roadways, and other infrastructure. The houses would include one- and two-story homes. The project would also include a variety of screening shrubs, accent trees, and canopy trees. The finished site elevations would range from 150 feet to 245 feet above mean sea level.

Impact AES-1. Scenic Vistas and Scenic Resources

The project would not be within, nor would it affect any views from, a State Scenic Highway as designated by the State of California. As such, the project would not result in any impacts on scenic resources within a State of California Scenic Highway viewshed.

The site is primarily visible from Cathedral Oaks Road, Royal Linda Drive, and King Daniel Lane, as well as from a few residences in the neighborhood south of Cathedral Oaks Road. Limited views are also available from the Glen Annie Golf Course, which is partially screened from views of the site by intervening topography and vegetation.

Cathedral Oaks Road is identified as a Scenic Corridor in the GP/CLUP, which identifies this area of the corridor as having views in all directions. Therefore, foothill and mountain views from Cathedral Oaks Road are considered a significant visual resource. Limited scenic views of the Santa Ynez Mountains are available at points to the east and west of the project site because of intervening development, topography, and vegetation. Views of the foothills and mountains are available from Cathedral Oaks Road directly adjacent to the project site due to the fact that there is limited vegetation and development on the site and that the topography slopes up gradually for the roadway.

Figures 4.1-4 and 4.1-5 illustrate the views from eastbound and westbound Cathedral Oaks Road, respectively, in the existing condition and with the project. Figure 4.1-6 shows the view across Cathedral Oaks Road from the intersecting King Daniel Lane. With the project, these

simulations show that views of the foothills and mountains would be reduced and screened by rooflines and vegetation, but not eliminated.

Because views from Cathedral Oaks Road of the foothills and mountains are a significant visual resource, and because views of the foothills and mountains from this portion of Cathedral Oaks Road are so limited, reduction of views of the foothills and mountains by the construction of the project would be a significant adverse impact on scenic resources.

Impact AES-2. Visual Character and Quality

Visual Character

The existing visual character of the project site is one of open, cleared land dominated by composting and woodcutting uses in the foreground, and by the perimeter vegetation of dense trees and shrubs. This open character contrasts with the adjacent golf course and multifamily residential properties, which are densely landscaped (golf course) or densely developed (residential). The open character also contrasts with the residential development south of Cathedral Oaks Road, which has houses relatively close to the roadway, partially screened by dense landscaping and privacy walls.

The project would change the visual character of the site from open and vacant to a planned residential community set back from Cathedral Oaks Road behind a wide greenbelt. Views of woodcutting and composting, low vegetation, perimeter vegetation, and foothills and mountains beyond the site would be replaced with landscaping and rooftops. Views of the houses and a privacy wall along the back of the greenbelt would be gradually reduced as the landscaping in the greenbelt matures.

The visual character of the site would continue to contrast with that of the surrounding properties. Compared with the dense landscaping to the east and dense building to the west, and the dense landscaping and close houses to the south, the site's character would represent a transition between dense landscaping to the east and the densely built environment to the west and south. The provision of a sidewalk along the north side of Cathedral Oaks Road, filling the gap between the sidewalks to the east and west of the site, would help tie the development into the existing environment.

Because there is no strong unifying visual character in the vicinity of the site, and because the site would represent a transitional visual character between the adjacent properties, the impacts of the project on visual character would be less than significant.

Visual Quality

The project site would have high visual quality after construction of the project, especially as the landscaping matures. This high quality would be a product of the landscape greenbelt and other landscaping and the unified building styles of the houses that would be constructed. Impacts to visual quality would be less than significant.

Impact AES-3. Substantial Light and Glare

Exterior night lighting, including street lighting, could result in the exposure of adjoining areas to excessive light and glare if such lighting is not properly shielded and directed away from neighboring land uses, or if the light standards are excessively tall, creating a situation where

appropriate light shielding is not possible. In addition, if appropriate dark-sky lighting fixtures are not incorporated and properly installed, project lighting could increase lighting of the night sky. Such night-lighting and glare impacts are considered potentially significant.

Impact AES-4. Obstruct Onsite Visual Resources

The project site itself is not considered scenic or visually significant. There are no waterways, interesting topography, or significant native habitats or vegetation on site. Existing landscaping on site is primarily limited to grasses, forbs, small shrubs, and trees scattered along the perimeter. There are no other natural or manmade features on site that are considered worthy of protection as a scenic resource. Because the existing property lacks features that could be construed as conveying significant positive visual resource values, potential project impacts to onsite visual resources are considered less than significant.

Impact AES-5. Loss of Vegetation, Open Space, or Natural Character

As a former avocado grove, now roughly graded and used for woodcutting and composting, the project site does not contain substantial or especially scenic open space. The change in topography and cut and fill activities for grading are not expected to result in significant impacts from altering the natural character of the site, and the amount of earthwork is not considered excessive grading. The existing trees would be replaced with a larger amount of new trees throughout the site as identified on the landscape plan. Therefore, impacts associated with vegetation removal, loss of substantial or especially scenic open space on site, alteration of natural character, and grading are considered less than significant.

4.1.4 Cumulative Impacts

The project would contribute to the overall changes in aesthetic resources of the City as it develops in accordance with the GP/CLUP. This includes the project's contribution to the trend of reduced scenic views of the Santa Ynez Mountains from Cathedral Oaks Road, which is a scenic corridor as designated by the GP/CLUP. Therefore, the project would contribute to a significant cumulative impact to visual resources.

4.1.5 Mitigation Measures

MM AES-1. Height Limitations

The height of structural development shown on final plans must not exceed the mean height and peak height shown on approved project exhibit maps. Finished grade must be consistent with the approved final grading plan. The permittee must ensure that the project complies with height limitations shown on plan sets approved with the land use permit.

Plan Requirements and Timing: During the framing state of construction and before roofing begins, the permittee must submit verification from a licensed surveyor demonstrating that the mean height and peak height conform to those shown on City-approved land use permit plan sets (see grading sheet for identification of finished floor elevation, elevation sheets for mean and peak height elevations in order to determine overall height above sea level).

Monitoring: The Planning and Environmental Review Director, or designee, must verify compliance before the City issues any Certificate of Occupancy.



Existing



Proposed

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Source: Interacta

Figure 4.1-4
Existing and Proposed View – Eastbound Cathedral Oaks Road
Shelby Residential Project EIR



Existing



Proposed

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Source: Interacta

Figure 4.1-5
Existing and Proposed View – Westbound Cathedral Oaks Road
Shelby Residential Project EIR



Existing



Proposed

MM AES-3a. Exterior Night Lighting Restrictions

To reduce impacts related to light and glare, exterior night lighting installed on the project site must be of low intensity, low-glare design, and must be hooded to direct light downward onto the subject parcel and prevent spill-over onto adjacent parcels. Exterior lighting fixtures must be kept to the minimum number and intensity needed to ensure public safety. These lights must be dimmed after 11 p.m. to the maximum extent practical without compromising public safety. Upward-directed exterior lighting is prohibited. All exterior lighting fixtures must be appropriate for the architectural style of the structure and surrounding area. All night/ambient lighting on streets and homes along the western boundary of the project site (adjacent to El Encanto Creek) must be directed away from El Encanto Creek.

Plan Requirements and Timing: The locations of all exterior lighting fixtures, complete cut-sheets of all exterior lighting fixtures, and a photometric plan prepared by a registered professional engineer showing the extent of all light and glare emitted by all exterior lighting fixtures must be reviewed and approved by the DRB and the Planning and Environmental Review Director, or designee, before issuance of any land use permit. A restriction prohibiting the redirection of any project lighting into El Encanto Creek and adjacent riparian habitat must be included into the project's Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs).

Monitoring: Before the City Council approves the Final Map, the Planning and Environmental Review Director, or designee, must verify that the lighting restriction is included in the recorded CC&Rs for the project. Before the City issues any Certificate of Occupancy, the Planning and Environmental Review Director, or designee, must inspect all exterior lighting fixtures to ensure that they were installed consistent with approved plans.

4.1.6 Residual Impact

The project would result in one significant and unavoidable impact (Class I): Impact AES-1 (impacts on foothill and mountain views from Cathedral Oaks Road). Implementation of MM AES-1 would reduce the impact on these views and the project's contribution to cumulative impacts on these views. However, because this mitigation would not prevent screening of views of the Santa Ynez Mountains and foothills, a significant and unavoidable impact would remain after mitigation. The project's impacts with respect to light and glare (Impact AES-3) would be reduced to a less-than-significant level with the implementation of MM AES-3a (Class II). The project's impacts with respect to visual character and quality (Impact AES-2), obstruction of onsite visual resources (Impact AES-3), and loss of vegetation, open space, or natural character (Impact AES-5) would be less than significant without mitigation measures (Class III).

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