

## 5. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Section 5 identifies the environmental impacts of the proposed Project. It also presents and applies criteria used to determine whether an adverse impact is significant under CEQA and describes feasible mitigation measures which reduce each significant adverse impact to a level of less than significant.

The significance criteria used in this analysis are established by the CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G, which are presented in the summary tables at the beginning of each issue area subsection in Section 5. Where indicated, some issue areas are also subject to the guidelines in the County of Santa Barbara’s Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual, which have been adopted by the City of Goleta. In 2008, the City adopted the County’s 2002 Environmental Threshold and Guideline Manual (published May 1992 and revised in October 2002). Since adoption by the City, the City has revised the Environmental Threshold and Guidelines Manual multiple times to reflect changes to the State’s CEQA Guidelines. For consistency with current CEQA requirements, the analysis in this MND relies on the most current County Environmental Thresholds and Guideline Manual published in January 2021.

### 5.1. Aesthetics

<b>AESTHETICS</b> Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, <b>would the project:</b>	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(c) In nonurbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Significance criteria established by CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G and County of Santa Barbara’s Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual, which have been adopted by the City of Goleta.

#### 5.1.1. Setting

Aesthetics, as addressed in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), refers to visual considerations in the physical environment. Aesthetics analysis, or visual resource analysis, is a systematic process to logically assess visible change in the physical environment and the anticipated viewer response to that change. The Aesthetics section of this IS/MND describes the existing landscape character of the Project site, existing views of the Project site from various on-the-ground vantage points, the visual characteristics of the proposed Project, and the landscape changes that would be associated with the construction, operation, and decommissioning of the Greenbark 30 Battery Energy Storage Project (the proposed Project), as seen from various vantage points.

When viewing the same landscape, people may have different responses to that landscape and any proposed visual changes, based upon their values, familiarity, concern, or expectations for that landscape and its scenic quality. Because each person’s attachment to and value for a particular landscape is unique, visual changes to that landscape inherently affect viewers differently. However, generalizations can be made about viewer’s sensitivity to scenic quality and visual changes. Recreationists, hikers, equestrians,

tourists and people driving for pleasure are expected to have high concern for scenery, visual quality, and landscape character. People who are commuting daily through the same landscape generally have a moderate concern for scenery, while people working at agricultural or industrial sites generally have a lower concern for scenic quality or changes to existing landscape character. The visual sensitivity of a landscape is affected by the viewing distances at which it is seen, such as close-up or far away. The visual sensitivity of a landscape also is affected by the travel speed at which a person is viewing the landscape (high speeds on a highway, low speeds on a hiking trail, or stationary at a residence).

Distance zones are delineated as immediate foreground, foreground, middleground, and background (USDA Forest Service, 1995). When a viewer is closer in proximity to a viewed object in the landscape, more detail can be seen and there is greater potential influence of that object on visual quality because of its form or scale (relative size of the object in relation to the viewer). When the same landscape feature is viewed at background distances, details may be imperceptible but overall forms of terrain and vegetation are evident, and the horizon and skyline are dominant. In the middleground, some detail is evident (like the foreground) and landscape elements are seen in context with landforms and vegetation patterns (like the background). For this analysis, four viewing distances were considered:

- Immediate Foreground (from the viewer to approximately 300 feet away)
- Foreground (approximately 300 feet to 0.5 miles away)
- Middleground (approximately between 0.5 and 4 miles away)
- Background (approximately four miles to the horizon)

### Visual Inventory Methodology

Visual resources of the Project site were investigated based on the following criteria: (1) existing visual quality and scenic attributes of the landscape; (2) location of sensitive receptors in the landscape; (3) assumptions about receptors' concern for scenery and sensitivity to changes in the landscape; (4) the magnitude of visual changes in the landscape that would be brought about by implementation, construction, and operation of the proposed Project; and, (5) compliance with State, County and local policies for visual resources.

The visual setting is described in terms of the existing *landscape character and visual quality* of the viewshed. Existing landscape character is an overall visual and cultural impression of landscape attributes — the physical appearance and cultural context of a landscape that gives it an identity and sense of place. Existing landscape character is determined by landforms, vegetation patterns, waterbodies, and cultural features. Visual quality is a judgment of a landscape's attractiveness, as determined by attributes broadly recognized as being valued and preferred by most viewers. Visual quality is expressed as a range of valued landscape attributes, often described in terms such as form, line, color, and texture. Combinations of these factors lead to evaluations of landscape character and visual quality, such as:

- High – a landscape of exceptional quality and beauty, valued for its scenic attributes.
- Moderate – a landscape that is common or average within the landscape character type.
- Low – a landscape that is lacking in scenic features.

The existing landscape setting and its viewers are characterized in terms of their overall visual sensitivity. Visual sensitivity consists of three components: viewer exposure, viewer concern, and visual quality. Viewer exposure affects a landscape's overall visual sensitivity. Landscapes that have very low viewer exposure (based on landscape visibility, the viewing distance, the number of people who view the landscape, or the duration of time that the landscape can be viewed) would tend to be less sensitive to overall visual change in the context of human experience of visual impacts.

Evaluations of existing landscape character and visual quality, combined with ratings of overall visual sensitivity, establishes the visual inventory methodology.

Key observation points (KOPs) generally are identified to represent the most critical viewing locations and the viewer groups likely to be affected by a project. As shown in Appendix C, six KOPs were identified to assess visual impacts. In addition, a view from a drone is used to show the existing site and proposed layout. Assessments of visual impacts are determined from the six ground-level KOPs. In the impact analysis, overall visual sensitivity is considered in combination with the level of visual change introduced by a project, as seen from a KOP, to arrive at preliminary findings of potential project impact significance. In this analysis impacts to foreseeable future viewers, such as residents of new and currently un-built subdivisions, were also analyzed to support the evaluation of cumulative impacts.

### **Existing Landscape Setting and Viewer Characteristics**

This section discusses the existing visual character of the region, existing visual quality in the Project site and immediate surroundings; viewer concern, and viewer exposure to the proposed Project, leading to a rating of overall visual sensitivity. Also discussed are the existing sources of light and glare within the Project site and immediate surroundings.

**Regional Context.** The proposed Project would be located on an existing vacant undeveloped property in an urbanized area of the City of Goleta in Santa Barbara County. The site is located at the end of a surface street. The Project vicinity is highly developed. The Ellwood Generating Station (EGS) and co-located SCE substation are to the west, with Las Armas Road and the Hideaway residential neighborhood beyond; the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) is to the north, with U.S. Interstate Highway 101 (US 101) and residential neighborhoods just beyond; to the east is a commercial parking lot with Ellwood Elementary School beyond; the Mariposa at Ellwood Shores elder care facility is to the southeast; and a vacant commercial parking lot is adjacent to the south side of the Project site, with Hollister Avenue just beyond. The Project site and adjacent parcels to the east, south, and southeast are zone General Commercial (CG), while the EGS parcel to the west and the elementary school to the east are zoned Public or Quasi Public. The Hideaway residential neighborhood is zoned Planned Residential.

The land use in the area is a mix of General Commercial, Planned, Community, Single-Family Residential, and Recreation, Public/Quasi Public. The proposed Project site is not located in an area designated as a protected scenic resource and is therefore not subject to scenic protection standards. The proposed site is located near an officially designated eligible Scenic Highway, US 101 to the north, and a designated Local Scenic Corridor (Hollister Avenue) to the south (Caltrans, 2025; City of Goleta, 2006).

**Project Viewshed and Key Observation Points.** Views of the proposed Project are limited by its location behind existing industrial developments, buildings, and vegetation. The closest residential community – the Mariposa at Ellwood Shores elder care facility – is approximately 200 feet to the southeast. The Project would not be visible from this location due to the existing vegetation, proposed landscaping, and perimeter screening. Trees on the site would remain except where need to be removed to accommodate safe access.

As shown in Appendix C, photos from KOPs are used to provide images of existing conditions and digital renderings of what the BESS would look like when viewed from each KOP (ERM, 2025 – Appendix C). Of the six KOPs, no change would be visible from KOPs 1, 3, 4, and 6 owing to vegetation and structures between the KOP and the Project. Viewers at KOP 2 would see a new fence and gate, and KOP 5 would have a view of the site as seen from the berm along the UPRR tracks. However, KOP 5 is not a site routinely visited by the public, as it is not adjacent to a road or walkway. Appendix C also includes a drone-based image of the vacant site and the site with the Project in place. This view is not representative of a view available from the ground.

**Viewer Concern and Sensitivity to Visual Change.** Viewer concerns regarding the observed landscape are shaped by expectations of what the viewer will experience and by existing conditions. The Project site is

currently vacant and not in use. As well, the surroundings on the south, east, and west sides of the site consist of a densely built environment. At the norther edge of the site is the UPRR with areas of dense vegetation between the UPRR and US 101. The railroad is at a similar elevation to the site, with the highway approximately 10-15 feet higher in elevation. Motorists on Highway 101 would have limited brief views of the site because of existing vegetation, the speed of traffic, and the elevation difference between the highway and the site. The residential community north of the highway has very limited views of the site due to existing vegetation and the distance to the site. The elder care facility to the southeast, along with the residential neighborhood to the west are the closest sensitive receptors to the site. The neighborhood to the west is separated from the site by the existing EGS and vegetation, and potential views of the Project site are blocked by the generating station and vegetation. From the south, views of the Project site are screened by existing vegetation aligning the northern boundary of the vacant, unused parking lot south of the site. There are no transmission poles currently at the site, and none are proposed to be installed. The tallest component would be approximately 10 feet above ground surface, although pending detailed design, some components may exceed 10 feet. The visual change due to the Project would be visible to a limited number of people, mostly people who live in the four houses fronting Las Amas Road, whose views would be largely screened by the EGS and existing mature vegetation. Views from Hollister Avenue are screened by existing mature vegetation along the road and along the southern boundary of the site. Portions of the site may be visible from some second story level windows in the elder care facility's north and west sides, but would be mostly screened by existing mature vegetation..

The limited views of the site would be consistent with viewer expectations – not perceiving a noteworthy change - given the industrial nature of the adjacent EGS facility and the extensive mature vegetation screening of the site from off-site viewers.

### 5.1.2. Regulatory Background

This section includes a description of the aesthetic resources' regulatory framework. There are no federal or state regulations or policies related to aesthetic resources applicable to the Project.

#### Local

**City of Goleta General Plan.** The City's land use policies – depicted below as General Plan Law Requirements (GP) and/or Coastal Act Requirements (CP) and promulgated from the Visual and Historical Resources Element – aim to preserve and protect Goleta's scenic and historic resources to the maximum extent feasible while allowing quality development in conformance with the provisions of the General Plan. The following policies in the General Plan generally relate to the proposed Project (City of Goleta, 2006b):

- **VH 1.5 Protection of Open Space Views. [GP/CP]** Views of open space, including agricultural lands, from public areas shall be protected. View protection associated with development should be accomplished first through site selection and then by use of design alternatives that enhance rather than obstruct or degrade such views. To minimize impacts to these scenic resources, the following development practices shall be used, where appropriate:
  - a. Limitations on the height and size of structures.
  - b. Clustering of building sites and structures.
  - c. Shared vehicular access to minimize curb cuts.
  - d. Downcast, fully shielded, full cut off lighting of the minimum intensity needed for the purpose.
  - e. Use of landscaping for screening purposes and/or minimizing view blockage as applicable.
  - f. Selection of colors and materials that harmonize with the surrounding landscape.

- **VH 2.1 Designated Scenic Corridors. [GP]** The Scenic Resources Map in Figure 6-1 (of General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan Section 6.0 Visual and Historic Resources Element) identifies corridors that pass through, or provide visual access to, areas of high scenic value. These corridors, or segments of corridors, include but are not limited to the following:
  - a. US 101.
  - b. Cathedral Oaks Road.
  - c. Hollister Avenue.
  - d. Los Carneros Road.
  - e. Fairview Avenue.
  - f. Calle Real.
- **VH 2.2 Preservation of Scenic Corridors. [GP]** The aesthetic qualities of scenic corridors shall be preserved through retention of the general character of significant natural features; views of the ocean, foothills, and mountainous areas; and open space associated with recreational and agricultural areas including orchards, prominent vegetation, and historic structures. If landscaping is used to add visual interest or for screening, care should be taken to prevent a wall-like appearance. Bridges, culverts, drainage ditches and other roadway ancillary elements should be appropriately designed; side slopes and earthen berms adjacent to roadways should be natural in appearance.
- **VH 2.3 Development Projects Along Scenic Corridors. [GP]** Development adjacent to scenic corridors should not degrade or obstruct views of scenic areas. To ensure visual compatibility with the scenic qualities, the following practices shall be used, where appropriate:
  - a. Incorporate natural features in design.
  - b. Use landscaping for screening purposes and/or for minimizing view blockage as applicable.
  - c. Minimize vegetation removal.
  - d. Limit the height and size of structures.
  - e. Cluster building sites and structures.
  - f. Limit grading for development including structures, access roads, and driveways. Minimize the length of access roads and driveways and follow the natural contour of the land.
  - g. Preserve historical structures or sites.
  - h. Plant and preserve trees.
  - i. Minimize use of signage.
  - j. Provide site-specific visual assessments, including use of story poles.
  - k. Provide a similar level of architectural detail on all elevations visible from scenic corridors.
  - l. Place existing overhead utilities and all new utilities underground.
  - m. Establish setbacks along major roadways to help protect views and create an attractive scenic corridor. On flat sites, step the heights of buildings so that the height of building elements is lower close to the street and increases with distance from the street
- **VH 3.3 Site Design. [GP]** The city's visual character shall be enhanced through appropriate site design. Site plans shall provide for buildings, structures, and uses that are subordinate to the natural topography, existing vegetation, and drainage courses; adequate landscaping; adequate vehicular circulation and parking; adequate pedestrian circulation; and provision and/or maintenance of solar access.
- **VH 4.6 Industrial Areas. [GP]** The following standards shall be applicable to industrial development (see related LU 4.2):
  - a. All structures shall be designed to be compatible with adjacent development relative to size, bulk, and scale.

- b. Where residential or commercial uses exist adjacent to industrial properties, such areas shall be buffered from industrial uses by increased setbacks and heavily landscaped screens
  - c. Transfer of noise off-site shall be minimized by the use of screen walls, acoustical enclosures, or building placement. Noise generating activities shall be located as far as possible from nonindustrial uses.
  - d. All outdoor storage or maintenance areas shall be screened. Landscaping may be used alone or in conjunction with fencing or walls.
  - e. Loading areas and recycling and trash facilities shall be easily accessed and screened from view with landscaping and/or fencing or walls. Adjacent uses shall be considered when siting such areas.
  - f. Roof-mounted equipment shall be screened and considered as part of the structure for height calculations.
  - g. Architectural detailing shall be used to break up the box-like appearance of construction typically used for industrial buildings.
  - h. Adequate lighting shall be provided for security and safety purposes but designed to prevent encroachment onto adjacent uses, wildlife habitats, or the night sky.
  - i. Sufficient, secure, and protected bicycle parking shall be provided.
  - j. Public transit shall be encouraged through effective placement of stops for local and regional transit services. Existing stops shall be upgraded as appropriate.
- **VH 4.9 Landscape Design. [GP]** Landscaping shall be considered and designed as an integral part of development, not relegated to remaining portions of a site following placement of buildings, parking, or vehicular access. Landscaping shall conform to the following standards:
- a. Landscaping that conforms to the natural topography and protects existing specimen trees is encouraged.
  - b. Any specimen trees removed shall be replaced with a similar size tree or with a tree deemed appropriate by the City.
  - c. Landscaping shall emphasize the use of native and drought-tolerant vegetation and should include a range and density of plantings including trees, shrubs, groundcover, and vines of various heights and species.
  - d. The use of invasive plants shall be prohibited.
  - e. Landscaping shall be incorporated into the design to soften building masses, reinforce pedestrian scale, and provide screening along public streets and offstreet parking areas.
- **VH 4.12 Lighting. [GP]** Outdoor lighting fixtures shall be designed, located, aimed downward or toward structures (if properly shielded), retrofitted if feasible, and maintained in order to prevent over-lighting, energy waste, glare, light trespass, and sky glow. The following standards shall apply:
- a. Outdoor lighting shall be the minimum number of fixtures and intensity needed for the intended purpose. Fixtures shall be fully shielded and have full cut off lights to minimize visibility from public viewing areas and prevent light pollution into residential areas or other sensitive uses such as wildlife habitats or migration routes.
  - b. Direct upward light emission shall be avoided to protect views of the night sky.
  - c. Light fixtures used in new development shall be appropriate to the architectural style and scale and compatible with the surrounding area.

- **VH 4.14 Utilities. [GP]** New development projects shall be required to place new utility lines underground. Existing overhead utility lines should be placed underground when feasible. Undergrounding of utility hardware is encouraged. Any aboveground utility hardware, such as water meters, electrical transformers, or backflow devices, shall not inhibit line of sight or encroach into public walkways and, where feasible, should be screened from public view by methods including, but not limited to, appropriate paint color, landscaping, and/or walls.

### 5.1.3. Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

#### Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

This visual analysis used the Visual Sensitivity/Visual Change (VS/VC) methodology to assess the visual effects of the proposed Project on existing landscapes. The VS/VC methodology includes a characterization of the visual sensitivity of existing landscapes, the characteristics of existing visual changes occurring and apparent in the landscape, and the characteristics of the proposed Project.

Following professionally accepted practice in visual analysis, visual sensitivity consists of three components: visual quality, viewer concern, and viewer exposure. The description of visual quality notes the existing built structures and natural landscape features that contribute to overall visual quality. Viewer concern can be described as the personal expectations for the landscape that are held by the viewing public. Viewer concern is often reflected in public policy documents that identify landscapes of special concern or roadways with special scenic status, e.g., scenic highways. Viewer exposure also affects a landscape's overall visual sensitivity. Landscapes that have very low viewer exposure, based on landscape visibility, viewing distance, number of people who view the landscape, or duration of time that the landscape can be viewed, will tend to be less sensitive to overall visual change in the context of human experience of visual impacts. Landscapes with higher viewer exposure are more sensitive to overall visual changes. Overall visual sensitivity is rated on a scale from Low to Moderate to High. Based on the flat topography at and around the site, the distance between the site and residences and roadways, and the presence of mature vegetation screening the site, visual sensitivity is considered to be low to moderate.

Project-induced visual change could result from aboveground facilities, vegetation removal, landform modification, component size or scale relative to existing landscape characteristics, and the placement of Project components relative to developed features. The experience of visual change can also be affected by the degree of available screening by vegetation, landforms, and/or structures; distance from the observers; atmospheric conditions; and angle of view. Visual change describes the degree of actual visible change expected as a result of the Project. The fundamental elements of visual change include visual contrast, visual dominance, and scenic view obstruction. Visual contrast refers to visual discrepancies of form, line, color or texture of the project against the existing landscape. Visual dominance refers to the degree to which this contrast would demand the attention of casual viewers. Scenic view obstruction refers to the degree to which the project would block or intrude upon scenic view corridors, particularly those identified in public policies. Overall visual change is rated on a scale of Low to Moderate to High. As with visual sensitivity, overall visual change is ranked as low to moderate owing to how the site is screened by existing structures and vegetation, making the changes visible from only a few locations. In addition, the Project would be adjacent to an existing generation station, a parking lot, and a rail line. The visible change at the site would be consistent with the built features surrounding it.

In addition, the project is evaluated for conformance with applicable local plans and policies. Adopted expressions of local public policy pertaining to visual resources are given great weight in determining both visual quality and viewer concern.

The determination of which aesthetic changes cross a threshold of "substantial adverse effect" or degradation is based upon the criteria described in the methodology summary (above) and in Table 5.1-1,

Visual Impact Significance Criteria. This table was used primarily as a consistency check, as determinations of visual sensitivity and visual change were based primarily on analyst experience and site-specific circumstances.

Implicit in this rating methodology is the acknowledgment that for a visual impact to be considered significant two conditions generally exist: (1) the existing landscape is of reasonably high quality and is relatively valued by viewers; and (2) the perceived incompatibility of one or more elements or characteristics of the project tends toward the high extreme, leading to a substantial reduction in visual quality.

Based on existing conditions at and surrounding the site and the proposed changes in the visual environment, the Visual Sensitivity is judged to be Low to Moderate. This is because the site is largely not visible because of the flat terrain, extensive mature vegetation, and separation of the site from residences and roads. Visual change would be Low to Moderate because the new installed equipment would be low profile and would be below the height of surrounding buildings, such as the EGS, and the existing vegetation.

**Table 5.1-1. Visual Impact Significance Criteria**

Visual Sensitivity	Visual Change				
	Low	Low to Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to High	High
Low	No impact <sup>1</sup>	No impact	Less Than Significant <sup>2</sup>	Less Than Significant	Less Than Significant
Low to Moderate	No impact	Less Than Significant	Less Than Significant	Less Than Significant	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated <sup>3</sup>
Moderate	Less Than Significant	Less Than Significant	Less Than Significant	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated
Moderate to High	Less Than Significant	Less Than Significant	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Potentially Significant Impact <sup>4</sup>
High	Less Than Significant	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Potentially Significant Impact <sup>4</sup>	Potentially Significant Impact

1 No Impact – Impacts may or may not be perceptible but are considered minor in the context of existing landscape characteristics and view opportunity.

2 Less Than Significant – Impacts are perceived as negative but do not exceed environmental thresholds.

3 Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated – Impacts are perceived as negative and may exceed environmental thresholds depending on project and site-specific circumstances but are Less Than Significant with mitigation incorporated.

4 Potentially Significant Impact – Impacts with feasible mitigation may be reduced to levels that are not significant or avoided all together. Without mitigation, significant impacts would exceed environmental thresholds.

**Project Visual Elements**

The Project proposes installing 10-foot tall BESS units within the central portion of a flat 2.1-acre vacant parcel. The Project would include a minimum 15-foot setback along the east, north, and west boundaries. A 50-foot setback along the southern boundary would provide a buffer between the developed features and the existing seasonal wetland feature located along the southern site boundary. A stormwater detention basin is proposed to be constructed on the south edge (downslope portion) of the BESS facility.

The only vertical elements of the facility would be the BESS containers and the surrounding site fencing and gates. Landscape visual screening is proposed along the northern, southern, and eastern boundaries. Because of the existing vegetation and trees along the western boundary between the proposed BESS facility and the EGS/SCE facility, the project proposes to install ground level landscaping features along that boundary line.

### Thresholds of Significance

A significant impact would be expected to occur if the proposed project resulted in any of the impacts noted in the above environmental checklist. Additional aesthetic thresholds of significance are contained in the County of Santa Barbara's Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual (2021), which has been adopted by the City of Goleta (adopted by Resolution 08-40). The Guidelines Manual thresholds are listed below:

**Threshold AES-1.** 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 project have the potential to degrade or significantly interfere with the public's enjoyment of the site's existing visual resources?

**Threshold AES-2.** Does the project 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)? If so, does the project have the potential to conflict with the policies set forth in the Local Coastal Plan, the Comprehensive Plan or any applicable community plan to protect the identified views?

**Threshold AES-3.** Does the project 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?

### Impact Analysis

Thresholds AES-1 and AES-2 are analyzed in Checklist Items (a) and (b) and Threshold AES-3 is addressed in Checklist item (c).

#### **(a) Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?**

*NO IMPACT.* The flat topography and developed character of this part of the City of Goleta does not provide scenic vistas, which typically are views of open spaces or views of the Pacific Ocean. The nearest mountains or areas of high elevation that would provide panoramic views that could include the Project site are over a mile away. Views from these locations would overlook the highly developed urban landscape, within which the BESS facility would be indiscernible. The Project site does not have significant visual resources that are publicly visible, and it does not have any natural features that would be considered to be a scenic resource. Development of the site would be screened by existing mature vegetation supplemented by additional landscaping, with no visual effect on a scenic vista. The Project would therefore result in no impact to a scenic vista.

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

*NO IMPACT.* The proposed Project would require limited site grading and limited tree removal. The nearest State Scenic Highway is US 101, located approximately 300 feet to the north, measured from the roadway's centerline. A locally designated scenic corridor, Hollister Avenue, is approximately 370 feet to the south of the project site. The Project site is not visible from these scenic highways due to existing vegetation and distance, or from any historic buildings. Additionally, as depicted on Figure 6-1 *Scenic and*

*Visual Resources* in the city's General Plan Visual and Historic Resources Element, the site is not designated as being an area that contains views either in one or all directions from a scenic corridor. As described above, the Project does not have any natural features that would be considered to be a scenic resource. Based on these conditions, there would be no impacts on scenic resources within a state scenic highway.

**(c) In nonurbanized areas, 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?**

*LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.* The Project is located in an urbanized area with primarily public/quasi-public land uses (Ellwood Elementary School and Ellwood Generating Station), general commercial land uses (Mariposa at Ellwood Shores elder care facility) and some residential land uses, as defined in the City of Goleta General Plan. The proposed Project, including the landscape visual screening, would be compatible with surrounding land uses.

During construction and decommissioning, equipment and vehicles to and from the site would be noticeable to the nearby businesses, residences, and persons using local roads, but this would be consistent with typical road use in the area. As well, construction activities would be temporary and would cease upon completion of the proposed BESS and associated facilities. Similarly, decommissioning activities would be temporary and would cease upon the completion of the decommissioning of the Project. There would not be excessive grading.

Currently, the site is vacant land with trees at its edges, and the portion of the site occupied by the BESS would be covered in gravel, with concrete pads for the BESS units. The 66 kV interconnection to the adjacent SCE substation would be placed underground and would not be visible. Existing trees would remain except where trees need to be removed to accommodate safe access. Pending detailed design and fire safety review, the eucalyptus trees along the western perimeter of the Project site parcel may need to be pruned or removed. This pruning or removal of trees would change the Project site but would not be a significant visual change within the overall landscape, or a substantial alteration of the natural character, due to the urbanized character of the area.

As discussed in Section 4.9, landscape visual screening is proposed along the southern, northern, and eastern perimeters of the BESS facility, and ground level landscaping is proposed on the western perimeter that would be appropriate for the Project site and consistent with the City of Goleta's urban design standards. Landscape plantings would include a mix of commonly used California native landscape screening species, such as Santa Cruz Island Ironwood, Holly Leaf Cherry, Western Redbud, Pacific wax myrtle, Lemonade Berry, Toyon, Pink-flowering Currant, Mugwort, and ground-level vegetation such as thin grass. The combined landscape coverage would be approximately 0.3 acres, exceeding the 10 percent minimum lot coverage specification in the IO zone district standards. Additionally, the proposed Project would be subject to the condition of approval AES1, listed below, which requires approval of the site plan by the City's Design Review Board, which would ensure that the Project design is consistent with the existing neighborhood character.

The proposed Project would be consistent, upon approval of the zone change and General Plan Land Use Designation change, with applicable zoning, regulations and the applicable policies of the City of Goleta General Plan, as noted in Section 5.1.1 and in Section 5.11 (Land Use); thus, the impact would be less than significant.

**(d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?**

*LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.* Construction and decommissioning would occur during daylight hours, from approximately 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and is not anticipated to include nighttime work that would necessitate the use of lighting within work areas.

Once constructed, the surfaces of new structures and enclosures would be non-reflective and would not create glare. There is no existing nighttime lighting at the site. The adjacent properties – including the Ellwood Generating Station and SCE substation, parking lot to the east, and the elder care facility – have existing night lighting.

For safety and security, low level lighting would be installed at the gates and at strategic locations around the facility. Consistent with the condition of approval, AES2 listed below, all Project lighting would be shielded and directed downward to minimize the potential for glare or spillover onto adjacent properties. The lighting would conform to National Electric Safety Code (NESC) requirements and all applicable City of Goleta outdoor lighting standards. The new lighting would be minimal and would not adversely affect the day or nighttime views in the area; therefore, the impact would be less than significant.

**5.1.3.1. Impact Conclusions and Mitigation Measures**

The proposed Project would not result in significant aesthetic impacts, and thus, no mitigation measures are recommended.

The following standard conditions of approval regarding design review of the proposed structures, landscaping, lighting, etc. will be applied to the project to ensure compliance with City's aesthetic/design standards:

**AES1. Recommended Condition of Approval: Design Review.** Prior to the issuance of building permits, the Applicant/Permittee must secure Design Review Board (DRB) final approval of the site plan, architectural style, colors and materials of the project that ensure compatibility of massing, heights, landscaping, lighting, and architectural consistency with the existing neighborhood character.

**Timing:** Before applying for building permits, the Applicant/Permittee must apply for design approval from the DRB and submit plans wherein the massing, height, landscaping, lighting, and architectural style of all proposed energy storage project equipment is consistent with neighborhood land uses and buildings and do not detract from existing neighborhood character.

**Monitoring/Reporting Party(ies):** The Planning and Environmental Review Director, or designee, must conduct a final review of the final plans before the City issues a grading permit. If the final plans are not in substantial conformance with the approved plans, the Planning and Environmental Review Director may refer the matter back to the full DRB for a final determination. The Applicant/Permittee shall also demonstrate to PER compliance monitoring staff that the project has been built consistent with approved DRB design and landscape plans prior to Final Building Inspection Clearance.

**AES2. Recommended Condition of Approval: Lighting Specifications.** Any exterior lighting installed on the project site must be consistent with the City of Goleta's outdoor lighting standards (consistent with General Plan Policy VH 4.12, and City of Goleta Code of Ordinances Chapter 17.35, as listed below:

- (a) low intensity;
- (b) low glare design;
- (c) be hooded to direct light downward onto the subject parcel and prevent spill-over onto adjacent parcels;
- (d) otherwise meet dark sky requirements.

Exterior lighting fixtures must be kept to the minimum lighting level and intensity needed to ensure public safety. These lights must be dimmed after 11 PM to the maximum extent practical without compromising public safety as determined by the Planning and Environmental Review Director. Lighting fixtures must be appropriate for the architectural style of the structure and surrounding area. The final lighting plan must be amended to include identification of all types, sizes, and intensities of wall mounted building lights and landscape accent lighting and a photometric map must be provided. "Moonlighting" type fixtures that illuminate entire tree canopies should also be avoided.