

Chapter 4

Environmental Settings and Analyses, Secondary Resource Areas

4.1 Aesthetics/Visual Resources

4.1.1 Existing Setting

The Project site is located approximately 0.5 mile northeast of the intersection of Foothill Road and Lillingston Canyon Road and just over one mile north of the Bailard Avenue exit on U.S. Highway 101. The property is located within a coastal rural area considered the front country of the Santa Ynez Mountains; the south facing foothills with riparian vegetation along blue line streams and drainages, native habitats (e.g., coastal sage scrub, oak woodland) interspersed with agricultural orchards, low-density residential development, limited greenhouse development, and low-profile agricultural support structures. Public views in this area are afforded from nearby roads including State Highway 192, Lillingston Canyon Road, and Gobernador Canyon Road. Gobernador Canyon Road provides the primary public viewshed for this Project, where intermittent views of portions of the campus are available. Figure 4-1a and b includes several photographs that present an overview of the visual setting at Cate School.

4.1.2 Regulatory Setting

The State of California's policies with requirements for aesthetic/visual resources that apply to the proposed Project include:

- The *California Coastal Act (CCA)* provides for the protection of sensitive coastal areas containing scenic and visual qualities typical of coastal areas. The CCA identifies sensitive coastal areas as those identifiable and geographically bounded land and water areas within the coastal zone of vital interest and sensitivity. Sensitive coastal areas include highly scenic resources. In addition, Coastal Act §30251 requires that the scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural landforms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.

County of Santa Barbara policies with requirements for aesthetic/visual resources that apply to the proposed Project include:

- The *County of Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan*, The Land Use, Open Space, Environmental Resource Management Element (ERME), and Scenic Highways Element contain descriptions, policies (Visual Resource Policies 1 through 9), and goals that both recognize scenic qualities and provide guidance for their protection. The intent of these plans and policies is to promote protection of important visual resources and ensure that any new development in a rural area is subordinate to natural landforms and maintains compatibility with the community and the surrounding environment. Project consistency with the goals and policies of these Elements is discussed in Chapter 5.0, *Policy Consistency Analysis*.



Existing Site from North



Proposed Site from North



Existing Site from South



Proposed Site from South

- *Open Space Element*: Significant visual resources as noted in the Open Space Element include: scenic highway corridors; parks and recreational areas; views of coastal bluffs, streams, lakes, estuaries, rivers, watersheds, mountains, and cultural resource sites and scenic areas. Of the six classifications within the Open Space Element, three address general scenic values: High (warrants strong consideration for open space designation and preservation), Moderate (recommendation for special design standards and design review by the Planning Commission for proposed development), and Low (Open Space Element standards required or recommended).
- The *Coastal Land Use Plan (CLUP)* establishes goals, policies, objectives, and implementation measures adopted by the County with the primary purpose of protecting and preserving resources potentially affected by any development located within the Coastal Zone. The goals and policies designed to protect and preserve visual resources which are applicable to this Project are listed below:
 - **Policy 4-3**: In areas designated as rural on the land use plan maps, the height, scale, and design of structures shall be compatible with the character of the surrounding natural environment, except where technical requirements dictate otherwise. Structures shall be subordinate in appearance to natural landforms; shall be designed to follow the natural contours of the landscape; and shall be sited so as not to intrude into the skyline as seen from public viewing places.
- The *County of Santa Barbara, Chapter 35, Article II, Coastal Zoning Ordinance* includes development standards protecting visual resources. Section 35.139 provides restrictions on outdoor lighting to protect spillover onto adjacent properties and to minimize lighting interference with vehicular traffic on private/public streets. Section 35.144 includes Ridgeline and Hillside Guidelines for areas with steeper terrain. Section 35.184 prescribes Board of Architectural Review requirements to ensure the visual quality and design of proposed development is in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood and/or community.

4.1.3 Impact Analysis

This section reviews the analysis and mitigation measures from the Scoping Document and MND and discusses the potential aesthetic/visual resources impacts associated with the proposed Project. Table 4.1-1 below provides a summary of the aesthetics/visual resources impacts resulting from the proposed Project.

Table 4.1-1. Aesthetics/Visual Resources Impacts

Aesthetics/Visual Resources Impacts	Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
Impact AEST-1. Buildout of the proposed Project could obstruct scenic vistas, public views, or create an aesthetically offensive site open to public view.	MM AEST-1	Less than significant with mitigation (Class II)
Impact AEST-2. The proposed Project could adversely change the visual character of an area.	MM AEST-2	Less than significant with mitigation (Class II)
Impact AEST-3. Construction of the proposed Project could result in the obstruction of a scenic vista or view open to the public or the creation of an aesthetically offensive site open to public view.	MM AEST-3	Less than significant with mitigation (Class II)
Impact AEST-4. The proposed Project could create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.	MM AEST-4	Less than significant with mitigation (Class II)

4.1.3.1 Thresholds of Significance

Appendix G of the State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines states that a project is considered to have a significant impact on aesthetic/visual resources if it would result in an impact on any of the listed criteria.

- 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?

The County Visual Aesthetic Impact Guidelines, *County of Santa Barbara Thresholds Manual* (County of Santa Barbara 2015) provide guidance in determining the importance of visual resources. The subjective nature of aesthetic impacts is discussed, and questions are presented which guide visual impacts analysis, rather than define a significance threshold. Affirmative answers to the following guiding questions would indicate potentially significant impacts to visual resources.

- 1a. 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?
- 1b. 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?
- 2a. 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)?
- 2b. If so, does the project have the potential to conflict with the policies set forth in the County’s Coastal Land Use Plan (CLUP), the Comprehensive Plan, or any applicable community plan to protect the identified views?
3. Does the project have the potential to create significant 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?

4.1.3.2 Project Impacts

Impact AEST-1. Buildout of the proposed Project could obstruct scenic vistas, public views, or create an aesthetically offensive site open to public view.

The primary public viewshed for this Project is from Gobernador Canyon Road, where intermittent views of portions of the campus are available. The campus is located in the foothills and is backed by Santa Ynez Mountains, and public views of the site are limited. The new development would either be set into an existing hillside or placed on the campus mesa, which is largely screened from public view. The proposed Project is designed to be visually compatible with the existing campus buildings in terms of scale, style, and building height. Impacts to private views would similarly be limited, both on the basis of the limited number of neighboring properties and the large distance between the Cate School property and the closest neighboring residences (approximately 1,000 feet to the north). In addition, the existing athletic fields would remain and function as a large visual buffer between future campus development and neighboring properties. While the new development may increase square footage of the built environment on campus and add to the total building footprint area, it would not obstruct any public views of scenic resources and would be compatible with the visual character of the campus and surrounding area with incorporation of mitigation measure (MM) AEST-1, *SBAR Required*. MM AEST-1, *SBAR Required*, would ensure that all Project elements (e.g., design, scale, character, colors, materials, and landscaping) shall be compatible with vicinity development, and would ensure the Project's compliance with *the Coastal Act Policy 30251* which regulates the design of new development and the protection of scenic views. Impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation* with implementation of MM AEST-1, *SBAR Required* (Class II).

Impact AEST-2. The proposed Project could adversely change the visual character of an area.

The proposed Project includes the construction of 180,861 sf of new building space, including two student dorms (replacing the existing 1925 Dormitory), six faculty residences, a classroom building, a student center/dining facility, a squash pavilion, a multipurpose building, and additions to the arts building and the gymnasium. While additional development would increase the overall density of the Project site and change the visual setting of portions of the site when viewed from offsite, new dormitories and student facilities within the campus could be generally clustered with existing campus development and would be located approximately 2,000 feet from existing development on neighboring properties. The proposed and replacement dormitories decrease residential densities and distribute student populations from the three replaced structures to a total of seven dormitories. The six new faculty residences (which are sited on an existing undeveloped slope that contains native vegetation) would be the most visually prominent components of the Project from public vantage points. These structures would be single story and set into the hillside, which would help to minimize their visual prominence. However, without careful consideration of the design of these new buildings, including size, style, color, landscaping, etc., the new residences could create an aesthetically offensive element of the viewshed open to public view and/or result in structures that are visually incompatible with surrounding development and remaining vegetation. While 18 of the 148 oak trees identified by arborists in the tree inventory are scheduled to be removed, more than 100 new native oak trees are

scheduled to be planted adjacent to proposed development, further screening visual impacts and preserving the character of the area.

The South County Board of Architectural Review (SBAR) has reviewed the Project and given it favorable comments to date. The proposed Project would include implementation of MM AEST-2, *Building Materials*, to ensure that only natural building materials and colors compatible with surrounding terrain and the existing campus are used on exterior surfaces of all structures. Preliminary and final review and approval by the SBAR (as required by Santa Barbara County) in addition to MM AEST-2, *Building Materials*, would ensure that the Project is visually compatible with its surroundings and would not significantly change the visual character of the area, thus addressing both public and private visual impacts. Implementation of MM AEST-2, *Building Materials*, would ensure compliance with *Coast Act Policy 30251* and *CLUP Policy 4-3* by ensuring the compatibility of the new development to its surrounding environment. With implementation of MM AEST-2, *Building Materials* impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation* (Class II).

Impact AEST-3. Construction of the proposed Project could result in the obstruction of a scenic vista or view open to the public or the creation of an aesthetically offensive site open to public view.

Given the scope of the Project and its phased implementation, temporary construction activities could potentially obstruct scenic views from nearby public roadways, especially along Lillingston Canyon Road. These activities would include onsite staging areas of equipment and materials, stockpiling of soils or excavation/demolition materials, and other onsite construction storage. MM AEST-3, *Onsite Construction Parking*, would ensure that all construction-related vehicles, equipment staging, and storage areas would be located onsite, outside of viewsheds of travelers along public rights-of-way. Such areas shall also be screened from views by the onsite campus population and adjacent properties to the extent feasible. Once construction is completed, scenic views would not be impacted, as discussed in detail under Impact AEST-1 above. With implementation of MM AEST-3, *Onsite Construction Parking*, impacts to scenic views from Project construction would be *less than significant with mitigation* (Class II).

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

Increased development on the campus, including new faculty residences on an undeveloped southeast-facing slope, could introduce new sources of night lighting and glare to the area. The proposed Project would create a new source of lighting from the development of new residences, dormitories, and program facilities. Cate School currently has several sources of permanent night lighting that include exterior security lighting and occasional outdoor field lighting. The exterior security lighting is used for the safety of on-campus residents. The outdoor field lighting is used for a variety of programs and events held on campus throughout the calendar year, including sporting events, dances, barbeques, and receptions (Table 2-4). Sporting events are typically held outdoors during daylight hours and student activities (e.g., dances, barbeques, and other activities with music) are generally held in the evenings (from 8:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.). All outdoor activities are either shut down or moved indoors by 10:30 p.m. and the Project does not propose any additional events. MM AEST-4, *Lighting*, would ensure that any exterior night lighting installed on the Project site is of low intensity, low-glare design, minimum height, and shall be hooded to direct light downward onto the subject lot and prevent spill-over onto adjacent lots. With incorporation of MM AEST-4, *Lighting*, impacts to nighttime views would be *less than significant with mitigation* (Class II).

4.1.3.3 Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures would reduce the Project's aesthetic and visual resource impacts to a less than significant level:

MM AEST-1 **SBAR Required.** *The Applicant shall obtain SBAR approval for Project design. All Project elements (e.g., design, scale, character, colors, materials, and landscaping) shall be compatible with vicinity development.*

Timing. The Applicant shall submit architectural drawings of the Project for review and shall obtain final SBAR approval prior to issuance of Coastal Development Permit. Grading plans, if required, shall be submitted to Planning and Development concurrent with or prior to SBAR plan filing.

Monitoring. The Applicant shall demonstrate to Planning and Development compliance monitoring staff that the Project has been built consistent with approved SBAR design and landscape plans prior to Final Building Inspection Clearance.

MM AEST-2 **Building Materials.** *Natural building materials and colors compatible with surrounding terrain and the existing campus shall be used on exterior surfaces of all structures. Water tanks and fences shall use earth-tones and non-reflective paints.*

Plan Requirements and Timing. Materials shall be denoted on building plans. Structures shall be painted prior to Final Building Inspection Clearance.

Monitoring. Planning and Development compliance monitoring staff shall inspect prior to Final Building Inspection Clearance.

MM AEST-3 **Onsite Construction Parking.** *All construction-related vehicles, equipment staging, and storage areas shall be located onsite and outside of viewsheds of travelers along public rights-of-way. Such areas shall also be screened from views by the campus population (e.g., students, faculty, and staff) to the extent feasible. The Applicant shall provide all construction personnel with a written notice of this requirement and a description of approved parking, staging, and storage areas. The notice shall also include the name and phone number of the Applicant's designee responsible for enforcement of these restrictions.*

Plan Requirements and Timing. Designated construction personnel parking, equipment staging and storage areas shall be depicted on Project plans submitted for Zoning Clearance issuance for each phase of development. A copy of the written notice shall be submitted to Planning and Development permit processing staff prior to Zoning Clearance issuance. This restriction shall be maintained throughout construction.

Monitoring. Planning and Development permit compliance and Building and Safety shall confirm the availability of designated onsite areas during construction, and as required, shall require re-distribution of updated notices and/or refer complaints regarding offsite parking to appropriate agencies.

MM AEST-4 **Lighting.** *The Applicant shall ensure any exterior night lighting installed on the Project site is of low intensity, low glare design, minimum height, and shall be hooded to direct light downward onto the subject lot and prevent spill-over onto adjacent lots. The Applicant shall install timers or otherwise ensure lights are dimmed after 10 p.m.*

Motion sensor lights should only cover areas immediately adjacent to structures and should similarly be hooded or shielded and directed downward.

Plan Requirements and Timing. The Applicant shall develop a Lighting Plan for SBAR approval prior to Zoning Clearance issuance for each phase of development incorporating these requirements and showing locations and height of all exterior lighting fixtures with arrows showing the direction of light being cast by each fixture.

Lighting shall be installed in compliance with this measure prior to Final Building Inspection Clearance.

Monitoring. Planning and Development and/or SBAR shall review a Lighting Plan for compliance with this measure prior to Zoning Clearance Issuance for structures for each phase of development. Planning and Development Permit Compliance staff shall inspect structures upon completion to ensure that exterior lighting fixtures have been installed consistent with their depiction on the final Lighting Plan.

4.1.3.4 Residual Impacts

Implementation of MM AEST-1 through MM AEST-4, including review and approval by the SBAR, as described above would ensure that any aesthetics/visual resources impacts are reduced to a less than significant level. Therefore, residual impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation* (Class II).

This page intentionally left blank.