

4.1 AESTHETIC RESOURCES

4.1.1 Existing Conditions

4.1.1.1 Project Setting

The community of Cayucos is located on a gently-sloped marine terrace situated between the Pacific Ocean and a series of low foothills rising up to the Santa Lucia Mountain Range. The diverse geologic features that characterize the region contribute to the high scenic quality of Cayucos and the coast. The most notable natural visual resources are Morro Rock near Morro Bay to the south, the fertile valleys and hills east of town, and unobscured views of the Pacific Ocean. The vegetation of the surrounding open space is predominately denuded grassland and scattered coyote brush, with natural stands of oak, sycamore, and pine trees at the lower elevations, primarily on the north- and east-facing slopes. Large windrows of eucalyptus trees can be seen in the regional landscape associated with ranches and old homesteads.

Cayucos is a compact community with well-defined edges, surrounded by the Pacific Ocean to the west and rural open space to the north, south, and east. Approximately 0.5 mile of open space separates the southern limit of Cayucos from its neighbor to the south, Morro Bay. Cayucos follows an overall linear form as it hugs the coast. Highway 1, a State Scenic Highway and National Scenic Byway, generally parallels the coastline through Cayucos. The majority of the town's northern portion is located between Highway 1 and the ocean; however, as the community stretches south along the coast, residential neighborhoods line the highway on both sides (refer to Figure 4.1-1 below).

Figure 4.1-1. Approaching Cayucos from the South on Highway 1



Cayucos is a beach community which retains a small-town visual character. Downtown Cayucos, located approximately 1.5 miles north of the project site, is defined largely by the Cayucos Pier, Cayucos State Beach, and Ocean Avenue, the main commercial street and local thoroughfare in town. Cayucos is a popular destination for visitors, due largely to the natural scenic variety and beauty of the surroundings, combined with the pedestrian scale, western-style, and eclectic architecture of the downtown area.

The residential neighborhoods that extend from the downtown area also contribute to the beach town aesthetic of the community. Older homes on small lots help preserve the small-town character of the area. Typical of an era, the buildings that greatly define the coastal community aesthetic tend to be one or two stories, with gable roofs and horizontal wood siding. Many mid-century residences are also seen with Modern style architecture, employing flat or shed rooflines with clerestory windows. Increasingly over time, many of the older structures have been remodeled or replaced. Some newer buildings maintain the appearance of the small beach town in terms of architecture and scale; however, a percentage of the newer structures are not consistent with the historic aesthetic character of the community. The trend toward utilizing maximum buildable envelopes, Mediterranean architecture, and contemporary materials and colors is changing the visual identity of Cayucos.

The Neighborhood

West of Highway 1

The neighborhood on the ocean side of Highway 1, adjacent to the project site, extends south from the project site along Studio Drive for approximately one mile. Many of the lots in this neighborhood front the Pacific Ocean and the houses in this area are mostly single-story and lower-profile to minimize effects on public ocean views. This neighborhood includes a range of architectural forms, styles, and age of structures (refer to Figures 4.1-2, 4.1-3, 4.1-4, and 4.1-5 below). No single type of architecture is dominant along Studio Drive, with a seemingly equal number of modern, post-modern, beach bungalow, and Mediterranean styles present. Common to the other neighborhoods in the community, the majority of homes along Studio Drive have gable or flat roofs. Landscaping is generally well-developed in this area, although few trees have been planted. Direct ocean views are available from homes along the bluff side of the street, while views to the ocean from many of the other homes in the neighborhood are obscured by the intervening houses and vegetation.

Figure 4.1-2. Studio Drive Neighborhood Adjacent to the Project



Figure 4.1-3. Studio Drive Neighborhood South of the Project



Figure 4.1-4. Bluff-top Homes along Studio Drive South of the Project



Figure 4.1-5. Pacific Avenue Neighborhood North of the Project



East of Highway 1

On the inland side of the highway across from the project site, houses can be seen as the landform rises up to the eastern hillside (refer to Figure 4.1-6 below). The homes in this neighborhood east of the highway are a mix of one- and two-story buildings. The forms and architectural styles of these houses vary greatly, which adds to the eclectic visual character of the neighborhood. Views of coastal resources from this neighborhood include the hillsides to the east and distant vistas of the Pacific Ocean and Morro Rock. The extent of ocean views increases as the homes to the east rise in elevation up the slope. Public roads in this area with elevated vantage points also have an increased access to ocean views.

Figure 4.1-6. Neighborhood East of the Project across Highway 1



Project Site

The project site is 3,445 square feet in size, and is bordered on its eastern boundary by Studio Drive. A single-family residence and the residential neighborhood that stretches south along Studio Drive are located immediately to the south. Morro Strand State Beach and the Pacific Ocean are located to the west of the project site (refer to Figure 4.1-7). Approximately 0.2 mile of open space is directly north of the project between Highway 1, Studio Drive, and the ocean. Within this open space, Old Creek crosses the beach from under Highway 1, continuing west to meet the ocean. Two unpaved parking and beach access areas are also within this open space north of the project site, one at the northern terminus of Studio Drive and the second north of Old Creek at the southern end of Pacific Avenue.

Figure 4.1-7. Project Site as seen from the Beach



The project site hugs the northwestern-most edge of the slope, at a location where the landform veers back to the east toward Studio Drive (refer to Figure 4.1-7). Project site elevations range from approximately 31 feet along the eastern and southern property lines to slightly less than 10 feet on the beach sand found at the northwest corner of the site. The general area surrounding the project site is characterized by coastal features, including beachfront adjacent to relatively low coastal and fluvial bluffs that range in elevation from approximately 30 to 50 feet. Small rock outcroppings are exposed along the edge of the beach sand, and an informal foot path runs from Studio Drive down to the beach along the north side of the parcel. Except for the rocky bluff areas, the site is mostly covered with non-native vegetation such as iceplant, statice, and other ornamental plants. One mature cypress tree is located adjacent to the southeast property boundary and one small pine tree is located at the southeast corner of the project site.

Because of intervening adjacent development to the south, coastal views from most of the project site are oriented to the northwest. Distant views of the Cayucos Pier can be seen, along with the northern portion of town and the coast as it extends to the northwest. Along the western-most side of the parcel, coastal views extend more toward the south.

4.1.2 Regulatory Setting

The project is located within the jurisdiction of the County of San Luis Obispo. The regulatory setting is defined in applicable planning policies and in the CEQA Guidelines. The regulatory setting pertaining to visual resources includes review of the proposed project's consistency with respect to the County's implementation of CEQA, the San Luis Obispo County General Plan Coastal Plan Policies, Conservation and Open Space Element, Estero-Coastal Area Plan, Title 23 County Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance, San Luis Obispo County Design Guidelines, and other supporting documentation.

4.1.2.1 State Policies and Regulations

California Coastal Act

Implementation of the California Coastal Act (CCA) is delegated to the County through adoption of the County General Plan Local Coastal Plan (LCP).

Policy clarification regarding consideration of public views versus private views is provided by the California Coastal Commission concerning §30251 of the Coastal Act:

The primary concern under this section of the Act is the protection of ocean and coastal views from public areas such as highways, roads, beaches, parks, coastal trails and accessways, vista points, coastal streams and waters used for recreational purposes, and other public preserves rather than coastal views from private residences where no public vistas are involved.

4.1.2.2 Local Policies and Regulations

Local Coastal Program

The Local Coastal Program, Coastal Plan Policies, Chapter 10, Visual and Scenic Resources cites the CCA as follows:

30251 – 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 land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of the surrounding areas, and where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.

30253 (5) – Where appropriate, protect special communities and neighborhoods which, because of their unique characteristics, are popular visitor destination points for recreational uses.

The Coastal Plan Policies Chapter 10 identifies “special communities and neighborhoods” along the coast. The project site is located along Studio Drive, a defined Community Small-Scale Design Neighborhood. The limits of special small-scale neighborhood designations are not specifically identified; however, the policies provide the following guidance regarding their selection criteria:

“Distinct from these visitor destination points are small-scale neighborhoods that have primary use by local residents and secondary use by the general public as access to the scenic shoreline.”

“Studio Drive (and Pacific Avenue) are residential neighborhoods characterized by 25 to 40 foot wide lots. Most of the structures are low profile and one story houses. The Studio Drive area is immediately adjacent to Highway 1, from which a view of the ocean is usually available.”

“Special coastal communities and neighborhoods are an integral part of the experience of the coast, and are often built on the most scenically-desirable areas. Coastal neighborhoods with distinctive qualities are a value to both local residents as well as visitors. Maintaining their present qualities will often require retaining the present scale and mix of development.”

“Within the urban areas defined as small-scale neighborhoods or special communities, new development shall be designed and sited to complement and be visually compatible with existing characteristics of the community which may include concerns for the scale of new structures, compatibility with unique or distinguished architectural historical style, or natural features that add to the overall attractiveness of the community.”

4.1.2.3 State and National Scenic Designations

In 1999, Highway 1 was designated by the State of California as an Officially Designated Scenic Highway. The County of San Luis Obispo promoted the designation based on the high level of existing visual quality along the corridor as well as the desire to protect its visual resources in the future. In 2003, Highway 1 was also bestowed the title of “All-American Road” in the National Scenic Byway program. This designation recognizes the visual characteristics of Highway 1 corridor as being among the highest quality in the nation. These designations illustrate the highest level of concern and sensitivity for the aesthetics within the project area and beyond. The state and national scenic designations for Highway 1 hinge on maintaining the high visual quality of the scenic corridor.

4.1.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the County. In addition to comparing the project to relevant policies and standards, the aesthetic resources assessment identified which specific criteria contribute most to the existing quality of each view and if change would occur to that criteria as a result of the project. If a change in visual criteria was identified, this change was analyzed for its potential effect on the existing scenic character. This analysis was combined with the potential number of viewers, their sensitivities, and viewing duration in order to determine the overall level of impacts. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on the environment if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below.

4.1.3.1 County of San Luis Obispo

The significance of potential aesthetic resources impacts are based on thresholds identified by the County in accordance with within Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. Aesthetic impacts would be considered significant if the proposed project would:

Create an Aesthetically Incompatible Site Open to Public View

Visual contrast may be used as a measure of the potential impact that the project may have on the visual quality of the site. If a strong contrast occurred where project features or activities

attract attention and dominate the visual setting, this would be considered a potentially significant impact on visual character or quality of the site, and mitigation would be required.

Introduce a Use within a Scenic View Open to Public View

If the proposed project could significantly degrade the scenic landscape as viewed from public roads, or in particular designated scenic routes, or from other public or recreation areas, this would be considered a potentially significant impact on the scenic vista. The scenic landscape in this case includes views of the Pacific Ocean, the beach, the Cayucos Pier, Morro Rock, and the hillsides and ridges to the east. The degree of potential impact on scenic vistas would vary with factors such as viewing distance, duration, viewer sensitivity, and the visual context of the surrounding area.

The project would result in a significant impact if it had a substantial adverse effect on a scenic resource as seen from Highway 1. A scenic resource would be a specific feature or element with a high degree of memorability or landmark characteristics that contributed to the high visual quality of the corridor. From along Highway 1 in the project vicinity, Morro Rock, the Pacific Ocean, and the Cayucos Pier are considered Scenic Resources. The project would result in a significant impact if it were to have a substantial negative effect on views of any of those specific resources, from public vantage points.

Change the Visual Character of an Area

Project related actions would be considered to have a significant impact on the visual character of the setting if they altered the area in a way that substantially changed, detracted from, or degraded the visual quality for moderately sensitive viewers in the area and was inconsistent with defined policies regarding visual character. The degree to which proposed change reflects documented community values and meets users' and other viewers' aesthetic expectations is the basis for determining levels of significance. Visual contrast may be used as a measure of the potential impact that the project may have on the visual quality of the site.

Create Glare or Night Lighting, Which May Affect Surrounding Areas

The project would result in a significant impact if it subjected public viewing locations or adjacent residents to a substantial amount of point-source lighting visibility at night, or if the collective lumination of the project resulted in a noticeable spill-over effect into the nighttime sky, increasing the ambient light over the region. The degree of impact caused by night lighting would consider the type of lighting proposed by the project action along with the lighting reasonably expected to be generated by the future development. The placement of lighting, source of illumination, and fixture types combined with viewer locations, adjacent reflective elements, and atmospheric conditions can affect the degree of change to nighttime views. If the project results in direct visibility of a substantial number of lighting sources, or allows a substantial amount of light to project toward the sky, significant impacts on nighttime views and aesthetic character would result.

Impact Unique Geological or Physical Features

The project would result in a significant impact if it had a substantial adverse effect on public views of a unique physical or geological feature. To meet such a significance criteria, geological or physical features would be rare or special examples of their type, with a high degree of memorability or landmark characteristics. From public viewpoints in the project vicinity, Morro Rock and various rock outcroppings found on nearby hillsides are considered

unique geological or physical features. If the project would result in a significant impact if it were to have a substantial negative effect on public views of these specific resources.

4.1.4 Impact Assessment and Methodology

4.1.4.1 Analysis Methodology

The analysis considers the existing development as part of the visual baseline. This includes the neighborhoods immediately surrounding the project, as well as other areas of the community that define the overall character of Cayucos. The visual quality of the community has as much to do with the built environment as it does the natural setting. Patterns of development, architecture, scale, massing and vegetation define how the community is perceived by residents and visitors alike.

In determining levels of impact, this study also compares the proposed project to the specific visual resource goals of the County. When the stated goals demonstrate that a high degree of value is placed on the visual environment, the standards to which the project must be compared are equally high. As a result of the valued small-town beach setting, combined with an awareness of scenic quality as reflected in county planning policy, it is anticipated that community and viewer sensitivity to visual changes on this prominent site will be high.

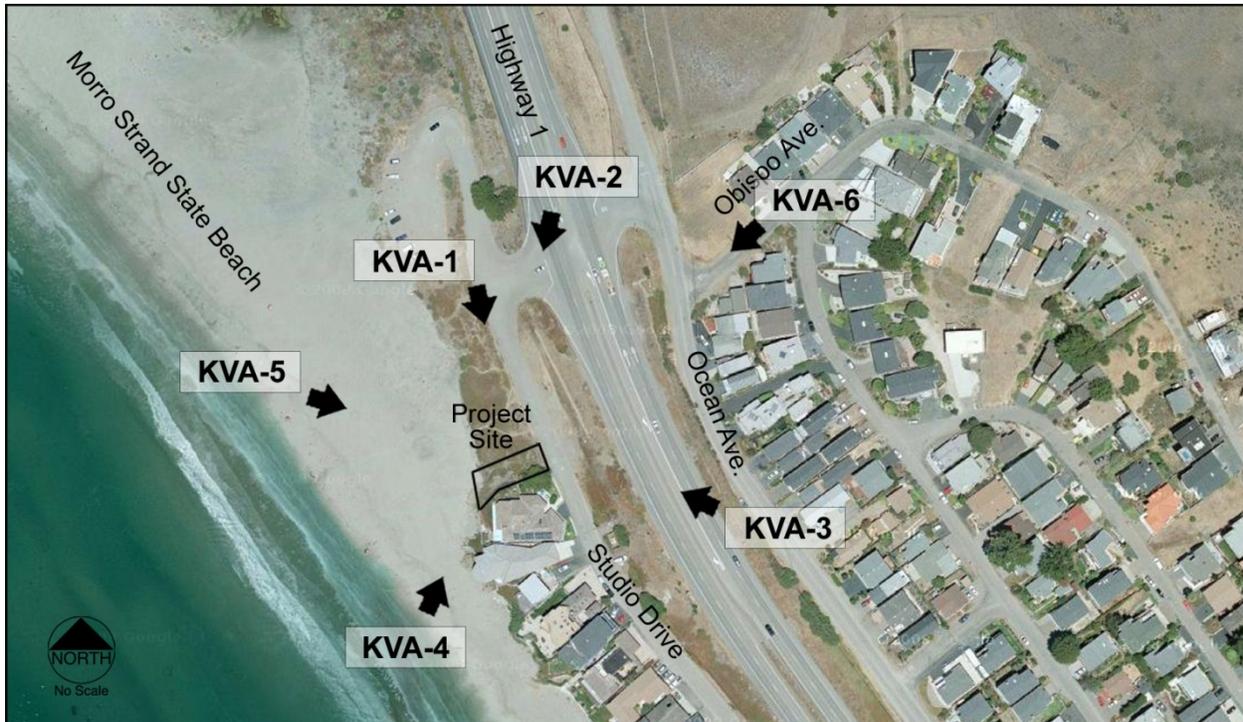
In order to understand the type and extent of physical change expected by project implementation, the physical size and form of the building and other site features were created on-site through the use of story-poles and other markers. Locations of critical structure elements were identified based on site plan information and architectural elevations provided by the project applicant. These critical project features were surveyed and staked in the field, and corresponding horizontal and vertical location data was developed. The architectural appearance of the building for inclusion in the photo-simulations was based on information provided by the project architect. Poles and reference flags were positioned at each critical point. These flags were used as a visual scale reference for confirming structure height and massing, ensuring accuracy of photo-simulations, and for determining overall project visibility.

The story-poles were then viewed from all potential public viewer group locations on Highway 1 and local roads in Cayucos, and from recreational areas such as Morro Strand State Beach. Resulting from this initial review, representative viewpoints were determined for further analysis, based on dominance of the site within the view, duration of views, and expected sensitivity of the viewer group. Of those representative viewpoints, Key Viewing Areas were selected which would best illustrate the visual changes proposed by the project (refer to Figure 4.1-8). Photographs were taken from the Key Viewing Areas, and photo-simulations were prepared illustrating the appearance of the project as proposed by the applicant. Visibility of the surveyed reference flags was used to ensure accuracy of the photo-simulations. The completed simulations were used to quantify potential project visibility and to assess related impacts. The project site was then field-reviewed to assist in determining possible mitigation measures. Images of the existing views, along with photo-simulations of the proposed project can be seen in Figures 4.1-~~11~~12 through 4.1-~~16~~17.

Figure 4.1-8 Story Poles



Figure 4.1-89. Key Viewing Area (KVA) Location Map



Project Visibility

Field studies identified segments of Highway 1, Studio Drive, and Morro Strand State Beach as the main public areas from where the project would be seen.

Views from Highway 1

Views from the highway include the hillsides rising up to the east, residential areas along both sides of the highway, and occasional views of the Pacific Ocean to the west. Closer views of the shoreline are limited from much of this section of highway because of the residential neighborhood on the ocean side of the roadway. North of the project site ocean and coastal views can be seen through an approximately 0.2-mile gap in development. The neighborhood surrounding the project site contributes to the quality of the Highway 1 scenic corridor. The individual houses collectively define a visual quality typical of a small-town beach community. As seen from the highway, the houses appear mostly compact in form and sit close together on relatively small lots with little yard space. A mix of building styles and ages is noticeable, resulting in a diverse neighborhood aesthetic evolved over the years.

Highway 1 Southbound

Traveling along Highway 1 in the southbound direction (KVA-2), the project site is first visible at a viewing distance of approximately 0.2 mile. The viewing duration in the southbound lanes is approximately 11 seconds for vehicles traveling at the posted speed limit. Highway 1 is a popular bicycle route, and the viewing duration from bicycles would be longer. At its closest point, the project site is approximately 150 feet from the southbound lanes. For the southbound highway viewer, ocean views are blocked by landform or vegetation until a point immediately south of Old Creek. At that point, views of the ocean and beach are fully visible. The existing residences along Studio Drive can be seen to the southwest. Views of the project are also available, although the lower portion of the residence would not be seen because of the project site's elevation somewhat below the highway (refer to Figure 4.1-910).

Figure 4.1-910. Project Site as seen from Southbound Highway 1 North of Studio Drive



From viewpoints along Highway 1 north of the project site, the proposed residence would have only a minor effect on ocean views. Existing ocean and beach views to the west would remain the same. Views toward the southwest are already substantially blocked by existing residences. By extending development further to the west, the proposed structure would add to the existing view blockage, however from most viewpoints along southbound Highway 1 the extent of blockage would be an insignificant percentage of the total available existing ocean view (refer to Figure 4.1-~~12~~13). The proposed structure would be consistent with heights of the adjacent residences, as measured from Studio Drive.

Highway 1 Northbound

From northbound Highway 1 (KVA-3), the project site is visible for a total of 0.1 mile, with a potential viewing duration of approximately 5 seconds. Intervening development generally blocks northbound views of the project site until a spot approximately 500 feet south of the Studio Drive/ Highway 1 intersection. Because of the project site's elevation below Highway 1, only the uppermost portion of the residence would be visible.

This viewshed in the northbound direction is generally defined by the residential development along the highway corridor, open space hillsides inland, and the Pacific Ocean to the northwest. Refer to Figure 4.1-~~13~~14 for the view from northbound Highway 1.

As seen from viewpoints east of the project along Highway 1, the project would partially block views of the ocean and the distant coastline to the northwest. This would appear as an extension of the view blockage caused by the existing residences.

Views from Studio Drive

The closest and most direct roadway views of the project are from Studio Drive (KVA-1). The project is visible along an approximately 800-foot section of Studio Drive. Traveling south along Studio Drive, the project occupies the foreground view, and would be clearly visible as the northernmost development along the row of houses. The project site occupies a highly visible location along Studio Drive. This local roadway serves many bicyclists and pedestrians, whom would have relatively close vantage points. From Studio Drive, building details, materials and finishes of the project would be easily noticeable to the casual observer. Direct views of the Pacific Ocean and the beach are available from portions of Studio Drive. These existing views are mostly oriented to the west and northwest. The existing residences along Studio Drive preclude much of the ocean view to the southwest. Morro Rock, another scenic coastal resource, is not visible from Studio Drive in the immediate project vicinity.

From viewpoints along Studio Drive north of the project, the proposed residence would have only a minor effect on ocean views. Existing ocean and beach views to the west would remain the same. Views toward the southwest are already substantially blocked by existing residences. By extending development further to the north, the proposed structure would add to the existing view blockage, however from most viewpoints along southbound Studio Drive the extent of blockage would be an insignificant percentage of the total available existing ocean view (refer to Figure 4.1-~~11~~12). The proposed structure would be consistent with heights of the adjacent residences. The project would block direct views of the ocean to the west as seen from viewpoints immediately adjacent to the project along an approximately 50-foot section of Studio Drive.

As seen from viewpoints south of the project along Studio Drive, the project would partially block views of the ocean, the beach, and the distant coastline to the northwest. This would

appear as an extension of the view blockage caused by the existing residences, noticeable along an approximately 150-foot section of Studio Drive.

At the northern terminus of Studio Drive, a public parking area provides direct views of the project to the south. From this vantage point, approximately 300 feet from the project, the proposed residence would be seen almost directly from the side. Because of the viewing angle the silhouette of the new building would mostly fit within the silhouette of the existing residences behind it to the south. As a result the project would not block views of coastal resources as seen from this public parking area.

Views from Morro Strand State Beach

The project site is directly visible from an approximately 0.5-mile stretch of Morro Strand State Beach (KVA-4 and KVA-5). The project would be seen in a context that includes beach sand and bluffs in the foreground, residential areas in the fore and mid-ground, and from some areas, open space hills as a backdrop (refer to Figures 4.1-~~14~~15 and 4.1-~~15~~16). Viewing duration from this vantage point could be indefinite because of the passive and static nature of some beach activities. As seen from points on the beach southwest of the project, the existing residential development along the bluff top dominates views to the east. From these southwest viewpoints, the proposed residence would block a portion of the view to the hillside to the east and northeast of Highway 1. Much of this hillside view is already compromised by existing development east of the highway. Views of coastal resources from beach locations northwest of the project would not be affected because the new residence would generally fit with the silhouette of the existing development to the south. Because of the project's location, no views from the beach toward the ocean to the west, southwest or northwest would be affected by the project.

Views from other roads and neighborhoods

The project site is also visible to some degree from other public roads and neighborhoods in the area. The type and extent of views from these locations varies, depending mostly on viewing distance, intervening development and orientation.

The closest neighborhood other than the Studio Drive neighborhood is located east of Highway 1 (KVA-6). Portions of this residential area are directly across the highway from the project site. This area is at a higher elevation than the Studio Drive neighborhood and extends up the hill to the east. Because of this elevation difference, only the uppermost portion of the proposed residence would be visible. From a limited area in the vicinity of Obispo Avenue and Ocean Avenue, the project would block a small portion of the view of the ocean (refer to Figure 4.1-~~16~~17). As seen from this viewpoint, the new residence would be visually consistent with the heights of the adjacent buildings along Studio Drive. As a result, where affected, views to the horizon line would still be maintained.

The project would also be seen from a portion of the neighborhood along Pacific Avenue north of the project, as well as from a public parking area at the southern terminus of Pacific Avenue and 24th Street (refer to Figure 4.1-~~10~~11). These viewpoints are approximately 0.2 mile from the project, and because of that distance, noticeability of the project would be substantially reduced. From these western viewpoints the proposed building would be seen from the side, and its visual silhouette would fit within the general silhouette of the existing development immediately to the east.

Figure 4.1-1011. Project Site as seen from the Parking Area near Pacific Avenue

4.1.5 Project-specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The project is proposed on a sensitive site in terms of community and highway corridor aesthetic character. The parcel is clearly visible from Highway 1, a Designated State Scenic Highway and National Scenic Byway, is within the Coastal Zone, and is within the foreground view of scenic coastal resources such as the Pacific Ocean and the beach.

4.1.5.1 Create an Aesthetically Incompatible Site Open to Public View

From surrounding viewing locations, the overall height of the project would appear visually consistent with the heights of existing houses lining Studio Drive (refer to Figures 4.1-1112 through 4.1-1617), and particularly the existing houses closest to the site. It is anticipated that as seen from most viewpoints, the height of the project would not be unexpected at this residential location.

The project proposes a building with a distinctly modern-style architecture and form. This style of architecture is seen regularly in the Studio Drive neighborhood and throughout the community (refer to Figures 4.1-2, 4.1-3, and 4.1-4). Although residential buildings often associated with the coastal community aesthetic tend to be beach bungalow style, modern style architecture is also part of the eclectic vernacular. These mid-century style buildings often employ simple forms, and flat rooflines with clerestory windows, similar to the proposed project.

Because of the existing residential setting, and the proposed structure's general consistency with the scale and architecture of the Studio Drive neighborhood, the project would be aesthetically compatible with the area, and potential impacts to public views is considered to be *less than significant* (CEQA Class III).

4.1.5.2 Introduce a Use within a Scenic View Open to Public View

Because of its location on the ocean bluff, the project would be visible from many public viewpoints and from many viewing directions. The project's proximity to the beach and Studio Drive allows for up-close viewing opportunities by the public. The greatest number of potential

viewers would be traveling on Highway 1, from where the project would occupy a portion of the mid-ground view, with the Pacific Ocean in the background. From Highway 1, the project would be more noticeable from the southbound lanes, since views from the northbound lanes would be mostly blocked by adjacent development. As seen from all areas on Highway 1, the lowest portion of the building and associated retaining walls would have limited visibility. The upper part of the residence would block a portion of the existing ocean view, from both the northbound and southbound lanes of Highway 1. From the southbound lanes, blue-water ocean views and the horizon line would be blocked a minor amount (refer to Figure 4.1-~~42~~13). As seen from the northbound lanes, blue-water views would also be briefly blocked, however views of the horizon and of the distant coastline hills would not be affected (refer to Figure 4.1-~~43~~14).

Although the project would block a portion of the ocean, the effect on the viewing experience would be minor. As seen from the highway it is estimated that the project would only block an insignificant percentage of the existing available ocean view. No views of unique, historic, or singularly memorable coastal resources would be affected. The existing residential development along Studio Drive currently limits views of the ocean and beach from Highway 1. It is anticipated that to most viewers, the project's small incremental effect on the scenic vista would just appear as an extension of the existing neighborhood condition. The high quality of the scenic vista would not be affected, and the extent of view loss would be minor or even un-noticed in the context of the remaining scenic viewshed.

As seen from southbound Studio Drive, the visual effect of the project would be similar to that from Highway 1; only a small portion of the total available ocean view would be affected, and the majority of the project would be seen within the visual silhouette of the adjacent development (refer to Figure 4.1-~~44~~12). From northbound Studio Drive south of the project, views of the ocean are blocked by existing homes. From the northbound direction, coastal views begin to open up as the viewer approaches the project site and begins to see around the northernmost residence. With construction of the project, existing coastal view blockage in the northbound direction and directly in front of the project would be extended a distance of approximately 150 feet along the street frontage. Outside of this 150-foot section, northbound views along Studio Drive would not be affected. Because existing coastal views along the approximately one mile length of Studio Drive are currently blocked, and there is approximately 300 feet of protected ocean views to the north of the site and extending to the Old Creek parking area, the additional 150 feet of affected view would be minor. The visual affect as seen from a vehicle would be approximately one second. Because of the short length, viewing durations from pedestrian and bicyclist viewpoints would also be very brief. Similar to the views from Highway 1, the project's small incremental effect on the scenic vista would likely appear as an extension of the existing neighborhood condition. The high quality of the existing scenic vista would be unaffected, and the extent of view loss would be minor or even un-noticed in the context of the remaining scenic viewshed.

Viewpoints from the beach toward the project would be generally oriented inland and away from the ocean. From these viewing areas, scenic coastal resources such as the hills east of the highway are somewhat compromised by existing residential areas as well as the highway. The uppermost portions of the hills however are undeveloped and can be seen from much of the beach area. Because of the existing homes along the Studio Drive bluff, public viewers closer to the base of the bluff can see less of the hills across the highway to the east. From most beach viewpoints northwest of the project, the proposed residence would not extend beyond the visual silhouette of the adjacent development behind it (refer to Figure 4.1-~~45~~16). As seen from certain viewpoints directly west and southwest of the project, the upper portion

of the new building would block a portion of the hillside to the northeast. From some closer viewpoints, the residence would block brief views of the ridgeline as well (refer to Figure 4.1-1415). Although a portion of the hillside views would be blocked by the project, the overall effect on the scenic vista would be minor. Views to the hills would not be blocked as seen from the majority of the beach area. No unique rock outcroppings or other memorable features are present within affected hillside areas. In addition, other hillside views would remain in the viewshed. The project and its subsequent effect on hillside views would appear to most viewers as an extension of the existing visual condition. Scenic ocean views from the neighborhood east of the highway would not be affected because the proposed residence would be consistent with the heights of the existing adjacent homes along Studio Drive.

Because the project would affect only a minor percentage of the available ocean and hillside views as seen from Highway 1 or from public roadways in the surrounding neighborhood or public beach, and because what would be affected would appear as an incremental extension of the existing visual condition along Studio Drive, the project's effect on scenic views is considered to be *less than significant* (CEQA Class III).

Specific Scenic Resources as Seen from the State Scenic Highway

As discussed in the previous section, the greatest number of potential viewers would be traveling on Highway 1, an Officially Designate State Scenic Highway and a National Scenic Byway. The upper part of the residence would block a portion of the existing ocean view, from both the northbound and southbound lanes of Highway 1. From the southbound lanes, blue-water ocean views and the horizon line would be blocked a minor amount (refer to Figure 4.1-1213). As seen from the northbound lanes, blue-water views would also be briefly blocked, however views of the horizon and of the distant coastline hills would remain (refer to Figure 4.1-1314).

Although the project would block a portion of the ocean, the effect on the viewing experience would be minor. As seen from the highway it is estimated that the project would only block an insignificant percentage of the existing available ocean view. No views of unique, historic, or singularly memorable coastal resources would be affected. The existing residential development along Studio Drive currently limits views of the ocean and beach from Highway 1. It is anticipated that to most viewers, the project's small incremental effect on the scenic vista would just appear as an extension of the existing neighborhood condition. The high quality of the scenic vista would not be affected, and the extent of view loss would be minor or even unnoticed in the context of the remaining scenic viewshed.

As a result, the project would have no adverse effect on scenic resources as seen from Officially Designated State Scenic Highway 1. Because the project would affect only a minor percentage of the available ocean and hillside views as seen from Highway 1 and because what would be affected would appear as an incremental extension of the existing visual condition along Studio Drive, the project's effect on scenic vistas is considered to be *less than significant* (CEQA Class III).

4.1.5.3 Change the Visual Character of an Area

The project site occupies one of the more visible residential locations in the community. The proximity to Highway 1 and Morro Strand State Beach greatly increases the potential number of viewers of the project. The volume of traffic on Highway 1 in the vicinity of the project averages approximately 11,000 vehicles per day (Caltrans 2008). Because of this large number of viewers and highly visible location, the appearance of the project would have an

influence on the visual character of the neighborhood. Any development of the site would include an inherent alteration of visual character. The change in character brought about by this project would be most noticeable in terms of its height, form, and architecture.

The project site itself is mostly covered with non-native vegetation such as iceplant and ornamental plantings. The visual context of the site is one of a residential beach neighborhood. Although the site's topography provides some visual interest to the setting, it is not memorable or unique. The exposed rock area along western portion of the site is a relatively insignificant portion of a larger, continuous rock face extending south along the bluffs. As noted above, the height of the project would not be unexpected at this residential location and the proposed architecture is aesthetically compatible with the character of the existing residences in the Studio Drive neighborhood.

Because of the existing residential setting, and the proposed structure's general consistency with the scale and architecture of the Studio Drive neighborhood, the effect of the project on visual character and quality of the site is considered to be *less than significant* (CEQA Class III).

4.1.5.4 Create Glare or Night Lighting Affecting Surrounding Areas

The EIR analysis assumes that exterior lighting would be included as part of the project. Because of the project's configuration and its proximity to public roadways and the beach, night lighting would be seen from the surrounding area. Unshielded light sources or bright-lights reflected on exterior walls would result in potential impacts. Fog is a common atmospheric condition of the area and increases the "glow-effect" as potentially seen from great distances. Although existing night lighting can be seen in the adjacent neighborhood, the project would increase the visibility of night lighting in the area.

AES Impact 1 Visibility of night lighting would affect views resulting in a direct long-term impact.

AES/mm-1 Prior to issuance of the building permit, the applicant shall submit interior and exterior lighting plans to the Department of Planning and Building for review and approval consistent with the following:

- a. The point source of all exterior lighting shall be shielded from off-site views, including beach areas.*
- b. All required security lights shall utilize motion detector activation.*
- c. Light trespass from exterior lights shall be minimized by directing light downward and utilizing cut-off fixtures or shields.*
- d. Lumination from exterior lights shall be the lowest level allowed by public safety standards.*

Residual Impacts

With implementation of this mitigation measure, impacts due to night lighting would be considered *significant but mitigable* (CEQA Class II).

4.1.5.5 Impact Unique Geological or Physical Features

As mentioned previously, the visual context of the site is one of a residential beach neighborhood. The project site is mostly covered with non-native vegetation such as iceplant and ornamental plantings. Although the site's topography provides some visual interest to the

setting, it is not memorable or unique. The exposed rock area along western portion of the site is a relatively insignificant portion of a larger, continuous rock face extending east-north-south along the bluffs. Furthermore, the project would not block or adversely affect views of any unique off-site geological or physical features. As a result, the effect of the project on unique geological or physical features is considered to be *less than significant* (CEQA Class III).

4.1.6 Cumulative Impacts

The discussion of cumulative impacts relates to the potential for the project to contribute to an aggregate change in visual quality from the surrounding public viewing areas, taking into consideration existing as well as proposed development. Cayucos has undergone a certain amount of visual change within the last several years due to new and reconstructed residential and commercial development. These changes have resulted in a slightly increased built-character throughout the community. Visual changes to the neighborhoods surrounding the project are mostly the result of new residential infill development and remodels. As existing residential structures age, new houses and reconstruction are expected to continue. Much of the new construction in Cayucos is not visible from Highway 1 because of intervening landform, existing development, or viewing distance.

The project would be consistent with the development patterns throughout Cayucos, and would not be an unexpected visual feature. Although the proposed residence would contribute to the built environment, it is considered in-fill and would merely add one more house on an existing legal lot of record, along a 1 mile long neighborhood of existing houses. As a result, and because the project would appear as a minor incremental extension of the existing visual condition along Studio Drive, the project's cumulative effect on the visual environment is considered to be *less than significant* (CEQA Class III).

Figure 4.1-4112. Key Viewing Area 1 – Studio Drive Looking South



Figure 4.1-1213. Key Viewing Area 2 – Highway 1 Looking Southbound

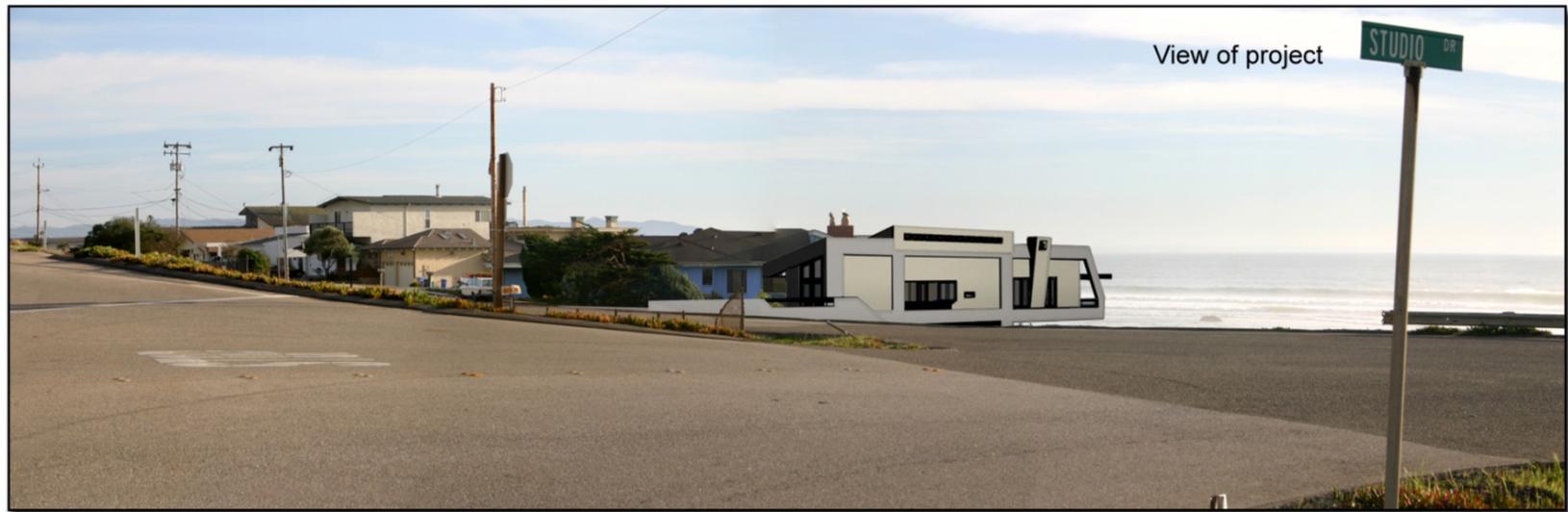


Figure 4.1-1314. Key Viewing Area 3 – Highway 1 Looking Northbound



Figure 4.1-1415. Key Viewing Area 4 – Morro Strand State Beach Looking Northeast



Figure 4.1-15 16. Key Viewing Area 5 – Morro Strand State Beach Looking Southeast



Figure 4.1-1617. Key Viewing Area 6 – Obispo Avenue East of Highway 1 Looking West

